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Analysis of Alpha Contracting from Three Perspectives: Government Contracting, the Government Program Office, and Industry

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ANALYSIS OF ALPHA CONTRACTING FROM THREE PERSPECTIVES: GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING, THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OFFICE, AND INDUSTRY

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Since it's inception as a 1990s-era acquisition reform, alpha contracting has been a collaborative effort utilized in a sole-source environment between government and industry to streamline an acquisition from beginning to end. This work examines alpha contracting from the three perspectives of the government contracting office, government program office, and industry to provide comprehensive data resulting in best practices for all participants at the Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM). This study analyzes literature review, case studies, and the results of a survey that was distributed to members of each of the three perspectives to identify attitudes toward using alpha contracting, as well as the audience's perceptions of efficacy and self-efficacy. Also, examined through this work are the benefits, challenges and risks to each of the three perspectives. The recommendation from this project is to utilize the results of this study to improve alpha contracting at RDECOM.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Army Contracting Agency
ACAT	Acquisition Category
ACC	Army Contracting Command
ACSW	Advanced Crew Served Weapon
AT&L	Acquisition Technology and Logistics
BOE	Basis of Estimate
CCB	Contract Control Board
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DCAA	Defense Contract Audit Agency
DCMA	Defense Contract Management Agency
DFARS	Department of Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement
DoD	Department of Defense
EMD	Engineering and Manufacturing Development
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FASA	Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act
FPI	Fixed-Price Incentive
GDATP	General Dynamics Armament and Technical Products
GPE	Government-Wide Point of Entry
IDE	Integrated Data Environment
IPT	Integrated Product Team
J&A	Justification and Approval
JSOW	Joint Stand-Off Weapon
LRIP	Low-Rate Initial Production
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
PALT	Procurement Administrative Lead Team
PARC	Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting
PCB	Proposal Change Board

PM	Program Manager
PWS	Performance Work Statement
RDECOM	Research, Development and Engineering Command
RFP	Request for Proposal
SDD	System Development and Demonstration
SOW	Statement of Work
WBS	Work Breakdown Structure

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The objective of this Joint Applied Project is to perform relevant research and to analyze users'experiences involving the process of alpha contracting at the Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM). Observation of alpha contracting from the perspectives of the contracting office, the program office, and industry, will provide comprehensive data resulting in best practices for all participants. Recommendations will be made to impart the most effective and efficient methods to perform alpha contracting in future procurements at RDECOM.

The authors expect to receive varying responses from each of the three points of view. However, the research provided is intended to instill appreciation of other perspectives and to perfect future alpha contracting. Finally, the authors hope to communicate the three groups'perspectives and correlate information to enable alpha contracting to be more mutually beneficial.

B. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The scope of this project focuses on alpha contracting involving contractors that negotiate with RDECOM and the seven RDECOM divisions located in Natick, Massachusetts; Aberdeen, Maryland; Edgewood, Maryland; Adelphi, Maryland; Research Triangle Park, North Carolina; Pine Bluff, Arkansas; and Denver, Colorado. Significant areas of research include history, teaming approaches, appropriate usage, processes, goals, policies, and regulations that govern the process. Further, the authors will review the utilization of alpha contracting and the lessons learned as a result of the Joint Stand-Off Weapons (JSOW) and Advanced Crew Served Weapon (ACSW) acquisitions. In particular, the authors seek to discover trends in positive outcomes and the processes that lead to those outcomes in order to overcome the disadvantages of alpha contracting in future actions.

Proficiency in alpha contracting is developed through experience at higher levels of acquisition, as well as education, and can require time to fully comprehend. The study

is limited to the experience levels of RDECOM contracting employees, program office employees and contractors'responses to the online survey. Secondly, online surveys, by nature, are plagued by negative attitudes toward the survey process and the lack of time available for response. While the survey is limited in length to encourage maximum participation and significant, honest responses, the results of the project are limited in this respect. Although many communication and organizational theories exist, a third limitation is that the theories used in this study are limited for realistic depth. The research team recognizes that it cannot fully explicate the abundance of theories that facilitate alpha contracting.

C. SIGNIFICANCE

With limited guidelines for the implementation of alpha contracting since its inception as a 1990s-era acquisition reform, this study seeks to inform and benefit current and future government and industry participants with a better understanding of diverse player perspectives. The authors'research, literature review, and case study analyses will reveal varying attitudes and beliefs about alpha contracting, clarify the motivational forces at work, align them with theoretical principles, and suggest ideas for process improvement and enhanced synergy among participants.

D. OVERVIEW OF ALPHA CONTRACTING

Alpha contracting is a collaborative effort utilized in a sole-source environment between government and industry to streamline an acquisition from beginning to end. A teaming approach, also known as an Integrated Product Team (IPT), is developed to involve a concerted effort among the government's contracting representatives, technical representatives, and contractor personnel. Alpha contracting necessitates the involvement of all participants from conception to eliminate the time-consuming and costly need for rework, modifications, cost over-runs, and duplicate actions characteristic of traditional contracting processes. The goals of alpha contracting are to enhance communication, reduce costs and procurement time, and improve the acquisition process without sacrificing contract objectives and requirements.

E. PROJECT ORGANIZATION

Chapter I sets forth an introduction to the purpose of this project as well as significance of the research. The scope provides parameters of the research and conveys any limitations in the research. Concluding the chapter are the research questions this study explores.

Chapter II provides a literature review including the background of alpha contracting. History and necessity for alpha contracting are presented as well as details of IPTs. The appropriate use of alpha contracting and a detailed explanation of the process follow. The goals and current policies of alpha contracting are also researched in Chapter II. The chapter continues with the JSOW and ACSW system case studies wherein alpha contracting was successfully utilized. There is focus on the theories that make alpha contracting suitable for streamlining the acquisition process. Further research continues as Chapter II progresses with examination of the roles of participants and the advantages and disadvantages of alpha contracting.

Chapter III discusses the research methods incorporated in this project. A combination qualitative and quantitative survey was provided to individuals from the contracting office, the program office, and industry. The chapter outlines the goals, design, scoring, survey subjects and survey limitations.

Chapter IV provides survey results and analysis of the collected data. The surveys were conducted for a better understanding of the alpha contracting process from the three points of view. The chapter includes insight into each of the focus questions including recommendations for improvement to alpha contracting at RDECOM.

Chapter V contains an overall summary including the results of the research provided by the literature review and survey responses. Recommendations for improvement to the alpha contracting process at RDECOM finalize the project.

F. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project report addresses the following six research questions:

- What is the audience's attitude toward using alpha contracting?
- What are the benefits, challenges and risks of alpha contracting for the contracting office?
- What are the benefits, challenges and risks of alpha contracting for program managers?
- What are the benefits, challenges and risks of alpha contracting for industry?
- What are the audiences'perceptions of alpha contracting efficacy and self-efficacy?
- How can we utilize the results of this study to improve alpha contracting at RDECOM?

The researchers'intent is to gain insight into alpha contracting by addressing these questions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. BACKGROUND

The following sections provide an explanation of the history and appropriate application of alpha contracting, inclusion of an IPT, and summation of the traditional sole-source process. Additional research provides the goals of alpha contracting and the policies that contribute to its proficiency. In addition, two successful case studies are highlighted. A look at theories that promote this mutually beneficial method and the roles and responsibilities of the three groups represented in this research are subsequently explored. The chapter concludes with presentation of advantages and disadvantages of alpha contracting.

1. History

A perusal of DoD history demonstrates substantial progress in simplifying the acquisition process since the mid-1990s. Current efforts continue to sustain improvements as well as search for more innovative methods. The DoD's primary focus has been to provide the warfighters with necessities in a timely manner. For example, a noteworthy accomplishment was the creation of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) of 1994, signed by President Bill Clinton, which, in effect, revolutionized alpha contracting by simplifying the acquisition process and streamlining procedures. Since the evolution of alpha contracting, many agencies across the DoD have welcomed it as an avenue to reduce acquisition lead time, cost, and revisions while simultaneously increasing communication and trust within the acquisition team (Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act, n.d.).

RDECOM, a major subordinate of the U.S. Army Material Command, also focuses on streamlining the acquisition process. RDECOM's objectives are to "get the right integrated technology into the hands of the Warfighters quicker; integrate, research, development, and engineering across the Army and the DoD, universities, and other science and technology resources; and take advantage of opportunities rapidly, no matter

where they arise" (U.S. Army RDECOM, n.d.). Utilizing alpha contracting will better ensure that these tough objectives are met.

Extensive literature research showed no record of the original application of alpha contracting or of the creator of the process. It evolved as acquisition reform initiatives transformed and is a beneficial tool in expediting the acquisition process. It is an interactive process that continues to evolve as shortcomings are corrected and lessons learned are provided. Contributing to the success of alpha contracting is the concerted effort of the IPT as discussed in detail below.

2. Integrated Product Team

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) defines an IPT as "a multidisciplinary group of people who are collectively responsible for delivering a defined product or process" (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 1998). This collaborative teaming approach is an underlying principle of alpha contracting that is vital to success.

Alpha contracting IPTs are comprised of, but not limited to, the contracting officer, contract specialist, program manager (PM), technical representatives, contracting officer representatives, Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA) representatives, Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) representatives, and contractor personnel including sub-contractors when necessary. The IPT may include technical representatives in specialized areas such as logistics, supply chain, finance, and quality control depending on the specific needs of the requirement. The finalized IPT should be a team uniquely qualified to meet any situations that may occur in addressing the particulars of the requirement.

The IPT should reach a mutual agreement on what goals, timelines, expectations, milestones, costs, contracting approach, and technical approach will be taken to guarantee that the requirements are met. The Army Contracting Agency (ACA) states several important factors for participants to consider when entering into this teaming arrangement, that include the following:

> (1) Require subject matter experts; (2) a shared interest in the success of the project; (3) an exchange of information across subject matter lines; (4) a forward thinking attitude; and (5) time to devote to the IPT. The government

> team should include members from any key specialties involved (e.g. supply, transportation, engineering, quality control, finance, contract administration). In addition, the prime contractor's primary subcontractors may also be part of the "team" especially for those contracts which are heavily dependent upon a unique specialty area that only one or a small filed of specialty subs can support. (p. 3)

The acquisition process is streamlined with the existence of the IPT, which enables all the key decision makers to interdependently create the requirements documents that are translated into the Request for Proposal (RFP) and the final contract. These knowledgeable individuals will assist each other in solving problems, making program-related decisions, providing guidance and developing the appropriate documentation.

3. Appropriate Use of Alpha Contracting

The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and Department of Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) govern the purchases of supplies and services at RDECOM pursuant to the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act of 1974. Competition in contracting is a major objective within these regulations. However, there are instances where competition is not in the best interest of the government, and a sole-source acquisition is the preferred approach. The FAR defines a sole-source acquisition as "a contract for the purchase of supplies or services that is entered into or proposed to be entered into by an agency after soliciting and negotiating with only one source" (2008, p. 57). Alpha contracting is conducted in a sole-source environment. As a result, the risks of protest are dramatically reduced when sharing information among all parties. Alpha contracting can be appropriate for new requirement sole-source contracts, modifications to existing contracts, and delivery and task orders within existing contracts.

Unlike traditional contracting procedures, alpha contracting uses a teaming approach from the beginning of the requirements phase through award. The contracting office, program office and the contractor all work together to define the requirement. Although further reviews to the requirement exist, there is less rework in getting the requirement clearly defined among all participants. The requirement is submitted to the

contractor through a formal RFP, and the contractor responds with a formal proposal to the contracting office. At this point, negotiations are conducted, and award documentation is prepared and submitted for signatures. The traditional contracting approach is discussed in-depth the following section.

4. Traditional Approach to Sole-Source Contracting

The first step in any type of acquisition is requirements identification. Requirements identification is performed for all acquisitions, including contract modifications and task orders contemplated under pre-existent contracts. Requirements identification involves the process of acknowledging a need and recognizing the best value to fulfill that need based on the requisition of industry capabilities and interest. During this step, market research is performed using a variety of methods and research tools to identify the path forward for the acquisition. After market research has been conducted, a market research report is generated, from which the recommendation to compete or proceed as sole-source is unveiled. Once the path has been decided, a synopsis is posted on the Government-Wide Point of Entry (GPE). For the DoD and RDECOM, the GPE is the Federal Business Opportunities website that can be accessed online by the public (FAR, 2008, p. 120).

If proceeding with a sole-source procurement, a written Justification and Approval (J&A) is required. The J&A must document the rationale for proceeding sole-source, and is prepared by the contracting office and program office. The J&A must be staffed and synopsized in accordance with the procedures set forth in the FAR and the DFARS as well as any internal RDECOM guidance.

The government prepares a Statement of Work (SOW) or Performance-Based Work Statement (PWS) detailing the tasks they desire the contractor to perform as well as an independent government cost estimate consisting of a breakout of the likely costs for the effort. Next, the government incorporates the SOW or PWS into a formal RFP with a specified due date and sends to the contractor. When the contractor receives the RFP, they prepare a technical proposal as well as a cost proposal, which are both due on the specified due date. The complexity of the action drives the proposal preparation time and resources used by the contractor. If the RFP is not written succinctly or the requirement

is vague, the contractor may have questions, which in turn the government answers. This additional communication can be time consuming and must be completely documented. The contractor responds to the contracting office with a proposal. At this point, the contracting office, as well as the program office, reviews the proposal. The program office evaluates the technical capability of the contractor, and the contracting office reviews the proposal for completeness and comprehensiveness. The cost proposal is sent to the DCAA for a full review of costs or a rate check. If contractors have audits, provisional billing rates, or forward pricing rate agreements on file, the DCAA review process is shortened. If there is no history available for the contractor, depending on the type of contract, DCAA audits can take more than 60 days. A cost analysis is performed concurrently with the DCAA audit by a designated cost and pricing analyst who verifies aspects of the proposal such as total ownership costs and cost realism. Both DCAA and the cost and pricing analyst, if utilized, issue a final report. The contracting officer may have to resolve any discrepancies between DCAA's recommendations and the cost and pricing report. If there are further questions concerning the contractor's proposal, the government may have to consult with the contractor, which increases proposal evaluation time and documentation.

Overall, the traditional contracting process can be time consuming resulting in a lengthy Procurement Administrative Lead Team (PALT), which begins when the contracting office accepts a procurement package and ends with contract award. Sole-source procurements tend to have a shorter PALT (anywhere from 4–12 months) than competitive procurements; but again, the complexity of the action is the driver.

Once the contracting office receives the information from the technical and cost analysis, negotiation objectives are prepared and negotiation spreadsheets are generated to breakout the total cost objective. Depending on the agency, the negotiation objectives, also referred to as Business Clearance, may need approval from higher authorities. Once negotiation objectives are approved, negotiations begin between the contractor and the government, during which the most common mentality is "us" versus "them" (Lambert, Liss, Li & Parmar, 2005). This mentality frequently lengthens negotiations depending on the complexity of the action. Additional fact-finding often occurs within the government,

independently by the contractor, and finally between the two parties, further increasing PALT. Revised portions of the technical and cost proposal may be requested by the government. Once the government is satisfied with the technical approach and costs are within the government budget, the contracting office must document the outcome of the negotiation and prepare a post-negotiation memorandum for necessary approval. The documentation in traditional sole-source contracting involves much iteration due to the number of approval levels. Once a final version of the post-negotiation memorandum is approved, the government sends the formal contract to the contractor for review and signature. The contractor reviews the contract to make sure it reflects the negotiations. At this point, the government awards the contract.

Traditional sole-source contracting is a serialized process containing independent distinct steps in the process that must be accomplished before moving to the next procedure. Each participant in the process reviews his/her own "rice bowl" ("Alpha Acquisition Overview," White, n.d.). Figure 1 illustrates the sole-source contracting process and the roles of both the government and the contractor throughout the process.

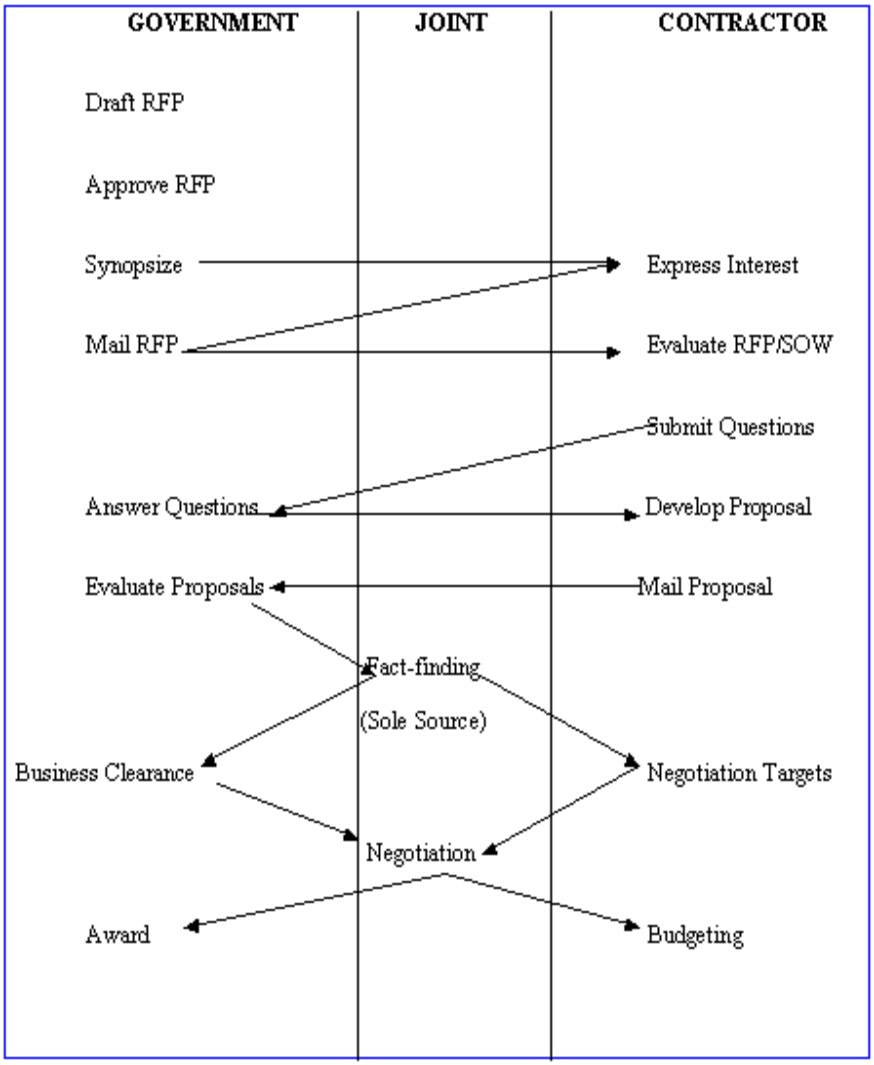

Figure 1. Traditional Sole-Source Contracting Flow (From: Nissen, 2001)

5. Alpha Contracting From Start to Finish

As shown in Figure 2, alpha contracting is a concurrent process wherein both the government and contractor can progress along side of each other. After the J&A is approved, the first step in alpha contracting is creating the IPT. As discussed above, the IPT is composed of a cooperative group of governmental affiliates and selected contractor/contractor representatives all of whom share a mutual goal. The IPT should define each member's roles and responsibilities prior to beginning work.

During the second step, the IPT develops a solicitation package also known as the RFP. After a detailed discussion of the requirement, the contractor and government

prepare respective opinions of the type, amount, and cost of the work required to meet the procurement objective. Both sides share their opinions, and in turn, address questions and comments on both sides. This eliminates the various, time consuming, iterations of the SOW or PWS and RFP because issues can be discussed expediently with both sides. In order to further streamline the process, members of both the government and contractor components should use an identical spreadsheet for the cost objective. The advantage of this technique is that costs are delineated and organized so viewers can manipulate the spreadsheet, and totals will be identical for everyone. The end result of this step is a formalized SOW or PWS, which is incorporated into the RFP and formally issued to the contractor.

The third step in alpha contracting includes the contractor's response to the RFP and the government's evaluation. After the RFP is issued and synopsized, the contractor completes portions of the technical and cost proposal, and the appropriate IPT members review the portions simultaneously. For example, DCAA and the cost analyst review and discuss their opinions on labor hours and rates concurrently and provide their analysis to the contracting officer. By the time the completed proposal is formally submitted to the contracting officer, most of the requirement has been agreed upon, and limited negotiations are required.

The fourth step in alpha contracting is negotiation. The contractor's negotiation objectives and the government's business clearance memorandum should be similar at this point due to the cooperation and discussions that have previously taken place. Both parties should have a mutual understanding of the requirement and the resource expenditure necessary to fulfill it. However, at this interval the collaboration effort can turn into confrontation (Nissen, 1997). The level of trust between the parties may be in jeopardy during this step due to the conventional "us" versus "them" mentality of negotiations. Sometimes, disagreements require decision making that may not equally satisfy all parties. The struggles with negotiations will be discussed in more depth further in this study.

The fifth and final step in alpha contracting is contract award. At this juncture, the contractor should not be surprised by any portion of the contract, as its entirety has been mutually refined and finalized as part of the contract development process.

In conclusion, the alpha contracting process involves a comprehensive plan using concurrent processing. The concurrent process involves all specialty representatives working in a concerted effort designed to eliminate duplication of effort and thereby make practical use of time, save resources, and increase understanding.

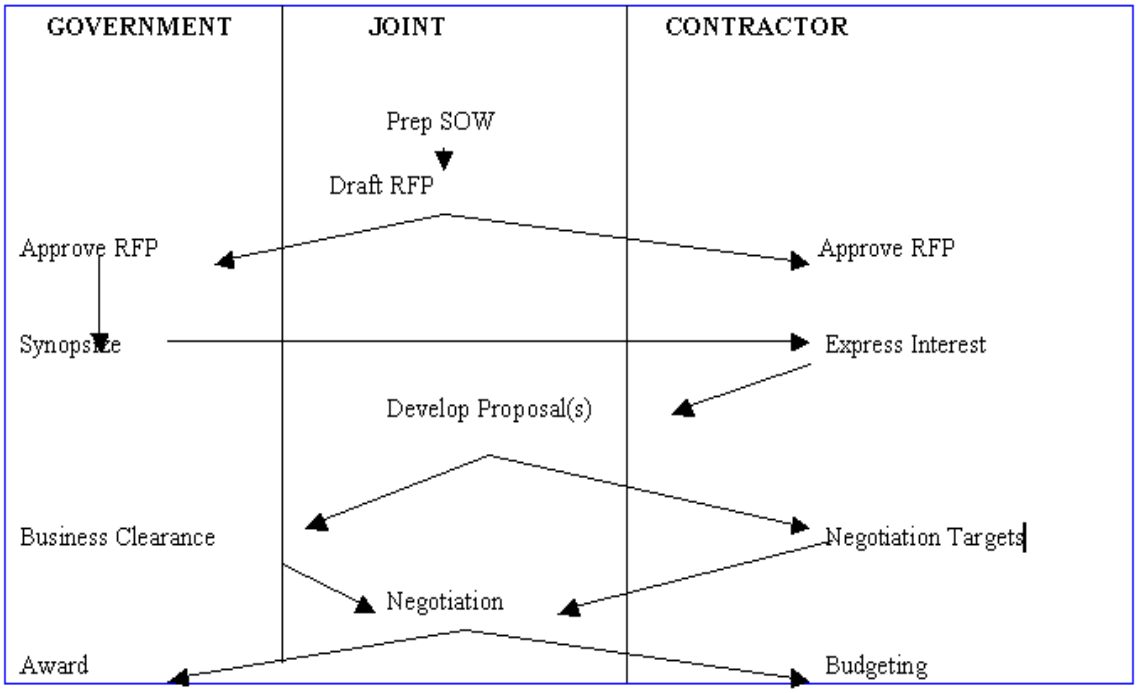

Figure 2. Alpha Contracting Process Flow (From: Nissen, 2001)

6. Goals of Alpha Contracting

The overarching goal of alpha contracting is to streamline the procurement process. More specific goals are to increase communication, decrease cost and cycle time, and improve the acquisition process while ensuring the contract objectives and requirements are met (ACA, 2003, p. 5). Successfully attaining the goals will improve the quality of the program by ensuring that all parties have the same depth of understanding. Alpha contracting should also create camaraderie among the team members that will encourage open communication and exchange of expertise to heighten the program's

level of success. The government, program office, and contractors should discuss particular goals for the program at the onset of the teaming arrangement so that those goals can be shared and mutually agreed upon.

7. Current Policies and Regulations

Because alpha contracting is designed to work within all existing guidance, it does not eliminate any current policies and regulations. FAR 5.101 requires agencies to post a synopsis on the GPE (located at http://www.fedbizopps.gov) of proposed contract actions costing over $10,000 (FAR, 2008, p. 119). This requirement remains applicable for actions that will utilize alpha contracting. An additional requirement that must be followed for all sole-source procurements is the preparation and staffing of a J&A document to limit competition in accordance with FAR 6.302. As mentioned above, this document must be staffed through specified government personnel based on the proposed dollar value of the acquisition. The requirement to prepare a J&A and publicize the requirement is driven by the Competition in Contracting Act of 1984. The goal of the act was to increase the number of contractors that submit bids and proposals for government procurements by announcing the opportunities to the public. FAR 6.305, as required by 10 U.S.C. 2304(f)(4) and 41 U.S.C. 253(f)(4), further necessitates the contracting agency to post the J&A on the GPE 14 days after contract award, with the exception of acquisitions that were awarded under Unusual and Compelling Urgency IAW FAR 6.302-2. In the case of an Unusual and Compelling Urgency, the contracting agency has 30 days to publish the J&A.

Another important requirement that exists in both traditional and alpha contracting is to generate an independent cost estimate, which is developed exclusively by government personnel. Although this is not a FAR or DFARS requirement, FAR 15.404-1(a) requires contracting officers to make certain the final price is fair and reasonable. In order to do this, the government needs a baseline to compare with the proposed costs from the contractor.

As detailed above, the government must provide a RFP to the industry counterpart. When using alpha contracting, the RFP is jointly developed. Nevertheless, a final version of the RFP must be provided to the contractor. In response, the contractor

submits a proposal detailing how they will accomplish the objectives listed in the PWS. Although the proposal in alpha contracting is jointly developed, the final version must be received from the contractor. As required by FAR 15.305(a) (3), the government proposal evaluation team or representative must evaluate the ability of the contractor to perform the work stated in the RFP. A review of the price proposal provided is also required in accordance with FAR 15.305 (a)(1). The requirement to document the contract file is pertinent in alpha contracting, and the same material documented in the traditional sole-source procurement environment is required to be documented in alpha contracting. FAR 4.801 requires that contract file documentation "shall be sufficient to constitute a complete history of the transaction." FAR 4.803 contains a detailed list of contents for documentation. In addition to the FAR, agency regulations at RDECOM require the utilization of the Army Contracting Command (ACC) checklist detailing contents of a contract file.

In summary, alpha contracting does not circumvent the FAR or DFARS requirements. Extensive research concludes there is limited policy and guidance on alpha contracting at the DoD level, and no internal guidance exists at RDECOM. Local policies at other agencies vary depending upon factors such as management style and flexibility. For example, a guide entitled, "The Alpha Contracting Process" was generated by the Army Contracting Agency (ACA) in August 2003. This brief 10-page guide lists the goals, processes, and benefits of the alpha contracting process but is more of an informative document than a procedural document, because there are no requirements or policies described. Overall, there are opinions, successful accounts, and lessons learned about alpha contracting available from employees, case studies and journals. The August 13, 2009, Army Sustainment Command's Advance Planning Brief to Industry listed alpha contracting as one of the "Process Efficiencies Used to the Max!" (Parsons, 2009). Even though the use of alpha contracting is widely recognized and advocated, specific guidance is sparse. The program office depends on the expertise of the contracting office for alpha contracting policies and procedure and has no policies of its own based on literature research. In addition, no standard industry policy exists

concerning participation in alpha contracting. As a result of the deficiency of policy, the government relies on previously successful alpha contracting experiences as detailed below.

8. JSOW Case Study

The JSOW is an air-to-surface missile. It is a joint venture between the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force, with the U.S. Navy taking the lead. The JSOW encompasses a "family of air-to-surface glide weapons that are 1,000 lb class weapons that provide standoff capabilities from 15 nautical miles, low altitude launch, and up to 60 nautical miles high altitude launch" (Wikipedia, n.d.). JSOW was "developed to be integrated with several current and future aircrafts, including the F/A-18, F-16, and B-52. JSOW is categorized as an Acquisition Category (ACAT) ID DoD program, representing a complex, software intensive weapon system" (Kirzow, 2009, p. 25).

Raytheon Texas Instrument Systems was awarded a cost-reimbursement contract to develop the baseline for JSOW in 1992. Several years later, JSOW received approval to enter into the Low Rate Initial Production (LRIP). Lot 1 was executed as an option under the Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) competitive contract as a cost-reimbursement type contract, but LRIP for Lot 2 was executed on a sole-source basis as a Fixed-Price Incentive (FPI) contract using alpha contracting (Nissen, 2001, p. 14). Dr. Nissen conducted a study on alpha contracting, and as part of that study, he focused on Lot 2 of the JSOW contract and the benefits received from alpha contracting.

Dr. Nissen found that alpha contracting required a substantial teaming arrangement among a number of key government personnel located in California and Florida and Raytheon contractor personnel located in Texas. This geographical separation forced government officials to travel to the contractor's facility for lengthy periods of time to work on the joint technical, cost, and contractual documentation (Nissen, 1997). Unlike other programs, this program initialized the alpha contracting process during the LRIP phase versus EMD phase. The change in contract type placed more risk onto the contractor, which produced a greater level of cooperation on the contractor's side.

Dr. Nissen's research found that the JSOW team came together to develop a number of innovative techniques that manage the alpha contracting process. One of the techniques was to create the "thermometer chart" that outlined priorities of the scope listed in the SOW. The chart also showed the level of joint reviews, negotiable areas, and applicable warranties. Another technique utilized in this program was the application of engineering style control. For this program, the control was referred to as the Contract Control Board (CCB), which included the deputy PM, PM, contracting officer, contract manager, and also the contract manager in charge of managing the RFP configuration. This technique required any change to the RFP be submitted and approved by the board before the changes could be made to the RFP. According to Nissen, "this process ensures two things: 1) all concerned parties are reviewing the same version of the RFP, and 2) the alpha team always has the most current RFP from which they prepare their proposal" (1997).

Nissen also found the team used a technique called the Proposal Change Board (PCB), which combines the proposal development, fact finding, negotiations, and contract management to develop cost estimates. The team also created a website to host all unclassified JSOW information and documents pertaining to the contracting process. The site included the "programs history, existing contracts, RFPs, data information, CCB minutes, proposal estimating ground rules, assumptions and cost summaries, and a host of other program-related documentations" (Nissen, 1997).

Overall, the JSOW program implemented the techniques that translate into the following advantages:

Techniques	Advantages
• "Thermometer chart" to outline priorities in SOW	• Reduced PALT • Cost savings
• Implementation of the "Contract Control Board"	• Reduced PALT • Decreased iterations/rework
• Implementation of the "Proposal Change Board"	• Reduced PALT • Decreased iterations/rework • Cost savings
• Creation of website containing unclassified program related documents viewable to the entire IPT	• Improved communication • Joint participation to improve learning curve • Decreased iterations/rework

Table 1. JSOW Program Advantages

Dr. Nissen explains the benefits derived from alpha contracting in this project acquisition include reduced cycle time, improved quality of contract documentations, joint participation which improved the organizational learning curves, and improvements to technical and contractual issues. He states that "the biggest benefit of IPTs, which allow for alpha contracting, is pride of ownership. All of the team members, government and contractor alike, hold the success of JSOW as a wondrous accomplishment of which they are all an important part" (Nissen, 2001, p.15). In addition to the JSOW, other programs have successfully utilized alpha contracting.

9. ACSW AT&L Article

One particularly documented successful case was the usage of alpha contracting in the ACSW system. The ACSW system was a common close support weapon system for the Army. It was a developmental, 25 millimeter, belt-fed, grenade machine gun with smart shell capability. The lightweight portable and mounted system entered the System Development and Demonstration (SDD) phase of the acquisition process in December 2003. On April 30, 2004, the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive and Armament Command team awarded a $94 million development contract using alpha contracting that was completed in 16 weeks from J&A approval to award (Lambert et al., 2005).

Contract award was made to General Dynamics Armament and Technical Products (GDATP) in the form of a potential $94.8 million cost-plus-award-fee contract

for system development and demonstration of the XM307 ACSW system. The award funded development work through December 2007 (Lambert et al., 2005).

Important lessons can be learned from the case study article provided in the Defense Acquisition Technology and Logistics (AT&L) publication from 2005 (Lambert et.al). The following summary offers lessons learned from the ACSW case study, which triggered additional research for this topic as well as a tool for the survey development in this study.

The article found the major lessons learned are the importance of planning and the need for teamwork. In addition to milestone and event planning, the article mentions the need to discuss the logistics of the alpha contracting negotiations to include the how, where, and when. The article mentions the concept of teamwork being essential. In order for the negotiations to be successful, the mindset of "us" and "them" had to be eliminated.

Before the J&A was signed, planning was executed to form the IPT. GDATP used major subcontractors to include: General Dynamics Ordinance and Tactical Systems, Raytheon, and Kaman-Dayron. IPT members were identified from GDATP, each subcontractor entity, and government representatives from the Project Manager Soldier Weapons program office, technical support, DCMA and DCAA. There was an IPT for each subsystem of the effort. Subsystems included systems engineering, program management, weapons, ammunition, fire control, integrated logistics support, safety, packaging, and test and evaluation. Each subteam had an informal facilitator, who rotated weekly to ensure the team was on schedule. Any discussion items that took extensive time were addressed later within the sub-group or with the whole ASCW IPT team. The issue of facilitators is further examined through the survey for this project (Lambert et al., 2005).

During the ACSW alpha contracting, the importance of scheduling was revealed. Scheduling was well planned, because it was organized weekly with milestones and deliverables in mind. The full ACSW team met at the beginning of the week to discuss the milestones and deliverables; however, time was also planned for strictly independent government and strictly independent contractor meetings. These meetings did not

circumvent the alpha contracting process, but were necessary to allow for specific communications that required discretion. Having measurable weekly deliverables allowed the team to have manageable goals and remain on task. The full IPT review of deliverables permitted the commitment to the overall effort (Lambert et al., 2005).

The team worked cohesively to develop the SOW and Work Breakdown Structure (WBS). The contractor's Basis of Estimate (BOE) was also worked on collaboratively. The contractor's capabilities and customer needs were taken into account, which resulted in cost savings. Early involvement of DCMA and DCAA proved to be beneficial as they were available for obtaining early buy in and knowledge of the contract. The initial time commitment for the team was substantial not only between the government and the prime contractor but also between the prime contractor and the subcontractors. To handle any conflict that arose, the team implemented a chain to move conflicts to the systems and program management teams. The conflict plans of the ACSW team included a formal, decision focus tool to organize the discussions (Lambert et al., 2005).

The study also stressed the importance of financial planning and disclosure of financial information and objectives. This was targeted by the researchers of this thesis as an area for further research. The ACSW utilized the program office estimate as a starting point, providing further evidence that a well-developed, independent, government cost estimate is essential. A rough annual budget was developed for each of the break out IPTs listed above. A range was developed for the award fee, so that funding would be available when the exact cost was solidified later in the negotiation process. Breaking out the budget without fee was convenient, so the team could focus on technical areas and then later discuss award fee, criteria for award fee, and evaluation plans. The entire ACSW team coordinated resulting in no duplication of effort. Two technical requirements of the ACSW were modified due to budget issues and the reduction in costs was done on a subsystem basis rather than a percentage cut rate (Lambert et al., 2005).

The ASCW team utilized an Integrated Data Environment (IDE), which permitted the sharing of data files, estimates, the SOW, WBS, and integrated master schedule. The use of the IDE proved crucial when teams met with subcontractors at various sites. Documents were free to flow and be updated throughout the use of the IDE. The speed

and the format of pricing systems benefited the contractor, technical, DCMA and DCAA members, and this in turn, reduced the entire PALT (Lambert et al., 2005).

The ASCW team utilized two phases over the span of the alpha contracting process: the technical phase and the contracts phase. The technical phase took nine weeks, and then the team transitioned to the contracts phase for weeks ten through sixteen. During the technical phase, the SOW, WBS and BOE were generated and approved. Documents pertaining to contract award were results of the technical phase. The use of the technical phase allowed the team to focus on technical capability and requirements without the complications of the award fee. A "Tiger Team" review was conducted in attempt to circumvent the solution to ensure the solidity of the technical approach. Once buy-in was obtained from both sides, the team progressed to formal pricing.

Overall, the ACSW program implemented the techniques listed that translate into the following advantages:

Techniques	Advantages
• Weekly milestone, event, and logistical planning	• Improved communication • Reduction of PALT
• Conflict resolution chain	• Increased trust • Reduction of PALT
• Integrated Data Environment	• Improved communication • Joint participation to improve learning curve • Decreased iterations/rework
• Two-phased approach	• Improved communication • Cost savings

Table 2. ACSW Program Advantages

The contracts phase covered the four-year, complex, pricing proposal for $94 million. A four year, award fee plan was developed. The two-phased approach proved successful for the ACSW team, and contract award was made in 16 weeks without having a schedule slippage of one day (Lambert et al., 2005). The aspects of the ACSW acquisition were valuable in the development of this study, and the lessons learned provided further research points.

The JSOW and the ACSW are two successful accounts of the use of alpha contracting. While there are numerous studies available, the above studies were selected as the most pertinent to the research for this study and as a basis for comparison to the methods and experiences at RDECOM. Our research methods and analysis included below further explore the advantages and disadvantages of alpha contracting within RDECOM.

B. THEORY

As discussed above, communication and organization within alpha contracting are important aspects of the process. Using the communication model and organizational model discussed below, alpha contracting is feasible and can result in an effective contract.

1. Communication Theory

As discussed previously, alpha contracting involves an extensive amount of communication within the IPT. The government usually decides on the choice of mediums for that communication. Common drivers for the type of media utilized include schedules of the individual IPT members and technological capabilities of the government team. The means of communication chosen make alpha contracting possible and affects the outcome. According to the media richness theory, the sender of the message should use the richest media available based on the message's ambiguity. Figure 3 shows the channels of medium from least rich to most rich. By using the IPT process, the information carrying capacity is increased by allowing for instant feedback (Cheney, Christensen, Ganesh, & Zorn, 2004). Alpha contracting exemplifies the media richness theory by using richer mediums of communication.

By using an IPT approach along with common spreadsheets and IDEs, alpha contracting takes advantage of the richer mediums that in turn provide for more effective communication. Based on the case studies, using richer mediums can result in fewer contract modifications, which can result in better understanding by both the government and contractors. The IPT approach used in alpha contracting mandates face-to-face communication, video conferencing, or teleconferencing. As explained, the JSOW

website and ACSW IDE allowed for the real-time sharing of information that would otherwise have been sent through leaner mediums such as e-mails. The advantages and disadvantages of alpha contracting listed below are related to the fact that richer mediums are being utilized more often. For example, by using face-to-face communication versus written correspondence, there is less rework to the documentation, increased trust among the parties, and reduced PALT. On the other hand, face-to-face communication can result in an increased time commitment and the need for documentation becomes important.

By using richer mediums that provide for more effective communication, the users of alpha contracting can better communicate with each other compared to traditional contracting. In turn, increased communication can lead to a better understanding of the alpha contracting process. With a better understanding of alpha contracting, team members may be more likely to use alpha contracting. As a result, the benefits of alpha contracting may increase and challenges and risks may be mitigated. The results of the survey will further explore the effects that richer mediums have on user attitudes, efficacy, and self-efficacy.

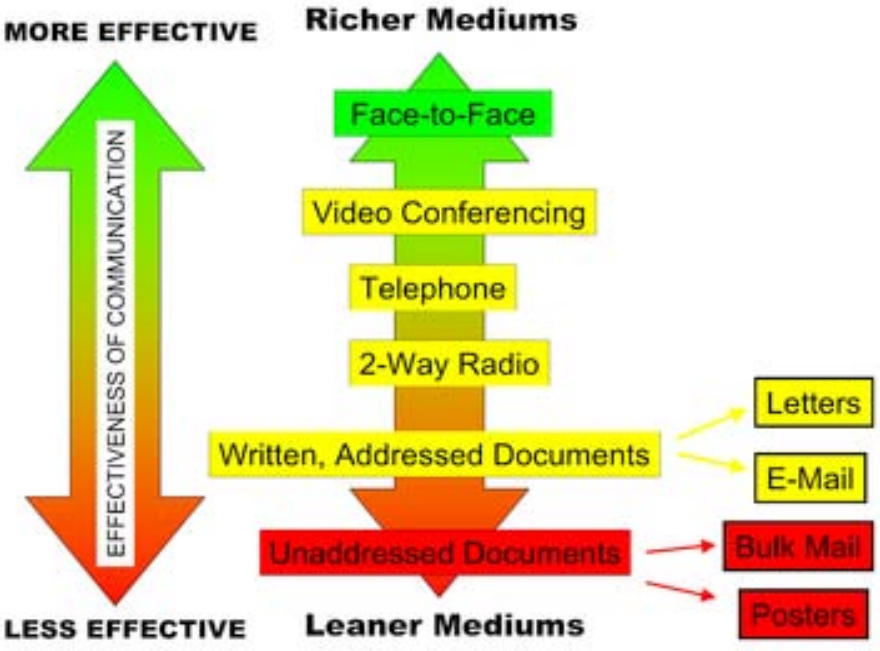

Figure 3. Media Richness Theory Diagram (From: Tntdj, 2007)

2. Organizational Theory

The evolving government and contractor relationship permits alpha contracting to be successful. The Competing Values framework is the assessment of culture in an organization or group created by Quinn and Rorbaugh to assess organizational effectiveness. Quinn and Rorbaugh believe there are two dimensions of organizational effectiveness: 1) organizational focus and 2) the contrast between stability and control and flexibility and change (Straker, n.d.). The framework shown in Figure 4 has four quadrants. The four quadrants make up the four models that consist of the Clan Model, the Hierarchy Model, the Adhocracy Model, and the Market Model. The four models in the framework characterize the undetected values within which programs and organizations exist. (Straker, n.d.)

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Flexibility and discretion</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Internal focus and integration</td><td>Clan</td><td>Adhocracy</td><td rowspan="2">External focus and differentiation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hierarchy</td><td>Market</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Stability and control</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 4. The Competing Values Framework (From: Straker)

The alpha contracting process is enabled by the Clan model of organizational control. The Clan model has less emphasis on stability and control and a greater concern for flexibility. The Clan model does not embody strict procedures and rules, and the people are driven through shared goals, outputs and outcomes. Rules may not be strict, but Clan leaders informally communicate them. High levels of trust are a necessity for the Clan model to be successful (Dillard & Zolin, 2005).

The communication theory of media richness and the organizational theory of competing values allow alpha contracting to be effective. Alpha contracting involves a high level of communication and trust between the various facets of the government along with industry.

C. ALPHA CONTRACTING WITHIN THREE PERSPECTIVES

The three perspectives that this study focuses on are the contracting office, the program office, and the contractor. The section below discusses the roles of each perspective in greater detail. This section also focuses on the advantages and disadvantages that affect each of the three groups.

1. Roles

This section discusses the roles of the three groups as well as their responsibilities during alpha contracting. While alpha contracting is a cooperative process, each group takes on different roles, which create efficiency.

Members of the contracting office that participate in the government's component include the contracting officer and the contracting specialist. Depending on the complexity of the acquisition, the contracting officer's involvement may vary. One role of government contracting personnel in the alpha contracting process is to facilitate the sessions and set forth ground rules. Ground rules may involve the procedures to follow for items of disagreement, keeping the IPT on track, setting time limits for discussion items, and determining the costing methods to be used. Goals should also be discussed to ensure buy-in from the government and the contractor. These may give the impression of simple tasks, but any miscommunication during alpha contracting can make the process less effective. The contracting officer, assisted by the contract specialist, will be the voice on behalf of the government. The contracting officer conducts negotiations; however, he/she is supported by technical staff, and third parties such as DCMA and DCAA.

Another role of the contracting office is to provide expertise on contract types and structure and recommend the most appropriate contract vehicle to IPT. It is vital that the contracting officer be a full-time member of the IPT with maximum attendance. The contracting officer will save a significant amount of time through the alpha contracting process if he/she is present during all discussions. The contracting officer is also responsible for coordinating any legal concerns with the legal counsel. According to an article published in the Army Aviation Modernization September/October 2000 edition

titled “Comanche and Alpha Contracting Not Just an Approach,” the author describes a list of useful initiatives that may help the contracting office successfully utilize alpha contracting (Huffstetler). Among these initiatives were utilizing an IPT, recognizing cost benefit trade-offs, establishing performance-oriented requirements, use of commercial items when possible, and electronic submissions of the proposals. (Huffstetler, 2000).

The government program office includes all technical representatives necessary for the requirement. The role of the government program office is to be thoroughly familiar with the technical aspect of the requirement and participate as part of the government team in SOW development and proposal evaluation. There should be subject matter experts for each area of work that requires a specialist. For example, logistics, cost analysts, transportation, engineering, quality control, and others should be present depending on the complexity of the requirement. The government program office has the responsibility to know the requirement’s priorities and areas that can be sacrificed or reduced due to funding constraints. This information should be discussed during acquisition planning prior to alpha contracting since it will create a burden should it take place within the government during the process.

The contractor’s role in the alpha contracting process is to represent the company. The contractor participants should also have some authority to make decisions, and the contractor’s subject matter experts should be available for negotiations, if necessary. The contractor may have a contracts manager, who is the equivalent of the government contracting officer, to represent the company. Subcontractor representatives may also be participants during alpha contracting negotiations if they are utilized for specific contract requirements. This is especially true if the prime contractor is in a sole-source situation with a subcontractor. It is important to note, the government cannot direct the subcontractors in any manner. However, the subcontractors can offer important information during the negotiations. As far as government is concerned, there are no privacy of information issues with subcontractors being involved (DAU, 2001). However, subcontractor privacy between the subcontractor and the prime contractor can become an issue. For example, if the prime contractor and subcontractor are competitors in other areas or contracts, they may not want to discuss proprietary information or trade

secrets. The need for the government to lay out ground rules concerning subcontractors in the beginning of alpha contracting becomes an important emphasis for issues of this type.

2. Advantages

As in the ACSW and JSOW cases there are great advantages to the use of alpha contracting. The ACA describes several advantages of utilizing the alpha contracting process that include: "1) improves communications between government and industry; 2) decreases the number of formal RFP iterations; 3) reduces the number of revisions and rework required due to misunderstandings, errors and mistakes; and 4) increases trust; 5) reduces the cycle time (PALT) required for the process for all participants; and 6) cost savings to the program" (ACA, 2003, p. 5). These benefits are explained in detail below and advantages will be investigated through the survey located in the Appendix to determine if they exist currently at RDECOM.

Improve Communication. The alpha contracting process involves all parties that have a vested interest in the program. The presence of a close working relationship among the contractor, the government, and the program office can reduce confusion or problems that may arise as the contract is being enacted. It also provides an opportunity for all parties to come together and discuss issues, thereby saving valuable time that would be wasted by going through numerous unnecessary channels. Building this rapport enhances open expression of opinion to communicate goals and objectives and eliminate hidden agendas and miscommunication among the members of the team (Nissen, 2001, p. 10).

Decrease Iterations/Rework. Nissen states that **"**Improved communications promotes common understanding between parties on opposite sides of the contract" (Nissen, 2001, p. 11). Use of this team approach decreases confusion among the parties that have to prepare documentation for the acquisition. Team members can have their questions answered before preparation and completion of official documents. The opportunity for all team members to work out opposing or conflicting issues in unison ensures that once the contract is in place, all parties are in agreement.

Increase Trust. The closure of the separation gap among the contracting office, the program office, and the contractors improves trust among the parties. Open

communication ensures that all parties have a unified goal, versus narrower, self-serving goals and objectives. Finally, joint resolution of issues allows each representative to understand and "appreciate both the areas of agreement and disagreement between themselves and their counterparts" (Nissen, 2001, p. 11).

Reduction of PALT. As a result of greater communication and the reduction in rework, there is a reduction in the PALT to award the contract. The PALT is reduced by eliminating processes and procedures that are not required for the award of that action. "Alpha contracting is designated not to merely reduce PALT, but to do so by removing non-required tasks and to streamline some of the remaining tasks within the contracting process" (Kirzow, 2009, p. 19). Each time a document has to be reviewed and approved, more time is added to the process. For example, when a RFP is released, and the contractor believes that there should be changes to the SOW, that document will have to be reviewed again by the technical, legal, and contracting offices before it is re-submitted to the contractor. These reviews add a significant amount of time to the procurement.

Cost Savings. The overall cost saving to the contract is a direct result of reducing rework and the PALT. All parties will benefit from those actions by reduction in duplication efforts and increased trust in the information exchanged. The government will save money by getting contracting, technical, DCAA and DCMA personnel involved and incorporating their recommendations. The contractor will also save money on proposal preparation costs. By allowing early involvement, the contractor is assured that he/she is providing the quality of product or service required instead of making assumptions that may only result in correction of misunderstandings. Time is money, so reducing the amount of time and man hours will reduce the cost of the acquisition.

Each year, RDECOM provides all of its employees with a "Year in Review", and in 2006 it listed an alpha contracting success story. The article describes the success of the rapid award of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) requirements as a result of "upfront communication between the key players with minimal negotiations and clarifications. As a result, the contract was awarded with a total procurement lead time of 27 days versus the average 180 days (an 85% reduction)" (Moore, 2006). The article goes on to explain how the lengthy process cost was reduced and the quality of the

contractor's proposal was improved resulting in enhanced contractor performance. This is an example of one acquisition that reflects the advantages of alpha contracting.

3. Disadvantages

While alpha contracting has many advantages, there are disadvantages that are apparent based on research of previous Naval Postgraduate theses and from case studies. The disadvantages of alpha contracting vary based on the complexity of the requirement. Common disadvantages noted throughout this research include increased time commitment, lack of empowerment, and damaged business relationships. These disadvantages will be investigated through the survey located in the Appendix to determine if they exist currently at RDECOM.

Increased Time Commitment. One disadvantage is that alpha contracting requires an extreme time commitment from all parties involved in the IPT. Whereas the process is designed to save time, the coordination and time commitment requires full attention of the members. Often travel is necessary. The IPT members should remain consistent throughout the process, which can monopolize their time. If a team member must be replaced, the milestone schedule may slip, or if the new team member is not knowledgeable of previous discussions, duplication of effort may occur. DCAA and DCMA, if utilized, need to be present during IPT meetings as well, which involves additional coordination. The ACSW team was successful because they fully informed team members of the intense commitment and travel schedule (Lambert et al., 2005).

Lack of Empowerment. Based on Goodwin's study, when asked if "IPT members are fully empowered during the Alpha process", sixty percent of respondents disagreed (2002). This research will use the question of empowerment from Goodwin's study as a baseline for RDECOM results. The structure of the government is hierarchical in nature, and management may not fully support the alpha contracting process. This is an inhibitor to the process, as management commitment influences the process to move quickly. Without commitment from management, the IPT can only progress in increments, each of which is followed by a management consultation. Also, the IPT members lose credibility if no autonomy is provided. This research survey investigates

management commitment, timeliness of decisions, and empowerment of the team for each of the three perspectives and will be discussed in the analysis section.

Damaged Business Relationships. While alpha contracting is a cooperative process, formal negotiations are held. Parties are not always satisfied with the result of every negotiated item. While a "win-win" result is preferred, previous occurrences showed that "give and take" must occur on a "win-lose" level. Nissen notes in the JSOW case study, "Negotiation represents a stressful activity which often reduces to a zero sum game, and hence collaboration may give way to confrontation, even before the formal negotiation step has been reached" (1997). When confrontation occurs, trust can be weakened, and the government may damage future business relationships. If one party is dissatisfied early in negotiations, willingness to be cooperative in latter disagreements may decline. The attached survey explores the level of trust and appearance of honesty of parties involved in the alpha contracting process and will be discussed in the analysis section of this paper.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter contains the research methods employed for this project as well as the goals of the online survey. A discussion of the survey design and the scoring used to analyze the surveys follows. The chapter concludes with an explanation of survey subjects along with any limitations of the survey.

A. SURVEY GOALS

This research is designed to collect and analyze the perceptions of three groups: the contracting office, the program office, and the contractors who have participated in alpha contracting with RDECOM. In order to identify best practices, perceptions, and opinions of participants an online survey was provided. The survey process allowed the researchers to analyze results in order to make recommendations for the future use of alpha contracting at RDECOM. One survey was designed to gather responses from each of the three groups.

B. SURVEY DESIGN

The survey focuses on answering the following research questions:

1. What is the audience's attitude toward using alpha contracting?
2. What are the benefits, challenges, and risks of alpha contracting for the contracting office?
3. What are the benefits, challenges, and risks of alpha contracting for program managers?
4. What are the benefits, challenges, and risks of alpha contracting for industry?
5. What are the audiences'perceptions of alpha contracting efficacy and self-efficacy?
6. How can we utilize the results of this study to improve alpha contracting at RDECOM?

A confidential and anonymous survey was distributed to 150 employees within the seven divisions of RDECOM. The survey was also provided to 30 program office representatives and 30 contractor representatives who have participated in alpha contracting with RDECOM for a total of 210 target participants. The survey did not contain identification criteria other than to which group a participant belonged. The survey was approved by the RDECOM Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC), Mr. Bryon Young, as well as the NPS Institutional Review Board. It was administered electronically, via Survey Monkey©, during the time period of June 23, 2010, to August 06, 2010. A survey was chosen as the most effective and efficient way to gather anonymous data about each group. The information below provides an explanation of the questions chosen for the survey. An analysis of survey results will be discussed in the next chapter.

The survey included a total of 50 questions developed by the researchers. The survey designed and used for this study is located in the Appendix of this study. Questions similar to Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) thesis entitled "Acquisition Reform through Alpha Contracting" were included to provide a baseline for RDECOM results. The previous NPS study focused on the effects of alpha contracting at the U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command (Goodwin, 2002). The questions were based on the literature research described above, as well as the case studies with the intent to answer the research questions for this project. The survey contained a combination of multiple choice, Likert-scale questions, and open ended questions. A few questions were rated with a percentage increase or decrease to be able to quantify the results in a percentage format. Questions 46 through 50 included open-ended qualitative answers to encourage participants to express their opinions in detail.

The first question of the survey notified participants of the intent of the survey and required a response to agree to participation. The second question in the survey questioned participants about how often they participated in alpha contracting. This question allowed the researchers to have exclusion criteria that in turn allowed the survey population to be comprised of only those relevant individuals that have participated in alpha contracting and also assess the frequency in which alpha contracting is used at

RDECOM. Questions three through six were objective background questions to determine the group, experience level of the participant, highest dollar value for which alpha contracting was used, and the facilitator of the process. These questions allowed for answers to be checked from a given list and were also designed to allow correlation with the other questions.

Questions seven and eight asked participants what they felt were the advantages and disadvantages of alpha contracting. Options were listed as well as an "other" block for participants to include any choices the authors did not include. These questions were designed to investigate the audiences'perceptions of alpha contracting efficacy; however, later questions provide more in depth analysis to each option provided as an answer choice.

The topics of questions concerning advantages and disadvantages reference those described above in the literature research section. The questions were worded in a non-biased language to encourage valid responses. Based on the survey analysis, the researchers intend to provide ways to improve alpha contracting at RDECOM.

C. SURVEY SUBJECTS

Survey respondents included RDECOM personnel, program office personnel who are customers to RDECOM, and contractors that work with RDECOM; all of whom have participated in alpha contracting. As mentioned above, the survey was designed to be anonymous within each of the three groups. Respondents were each provided an e-mail link to the survey. The PARC endorsed the survey to encourage maximum participation within RDECOM.

D. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

The survey by nature relies on a self-reporting method of data collection. Intentional deception, poor memory, or misunderstanding of the questions can all contribute to inaccuracies in the data. The survey is limited in that the perceptions and opinions expressed are not the official opinions of RDECOM or the specific contractor organizations. The results of the survey are a generalization of the organization and are

not agency policy. While the survey was sent to 150 RDECOM employees, only those employees who have utilized alpha contracting were requested to complete the survey. The survey was designed to follow a non-attribution policy.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

A. SURVEY PARTICIPATION

The researchers utilized the online software program, Survey Monkey©, to create the survey listed in the Appendix. A total of 210 potential survey participants composed of 150 RDECOM contracting employees, 30 program office representatives, and 30 contractor representatives, were contacted by e-mail to complete the online survey. Of the 210 total participants, 88 completed the survey for an overall response rate of 41%. A total of 37 of the 150 RDECOM contracting employees completed the survey for a response rate of 24%. Although this rate is perceived as low, the researchers only requested responses from those employees who have utilized alpha contracting. The percentage is an indication of the frequency of use of alpha contracting at RDECOM. Of the 30 program office representatives, 22 surveys were completed for a response rate of 73%; of the 30 contractor representatives contacted, there were 24 surveys completed for a response rate of 80%. It is important to note, the researchers requested responses exclusively from those program office and contractor representatives who have participated in alpha contracting with RDECOM. Of the 88 completed surveys, 5 respondents failed to indicate their role in alpha contracting. Because this study is concerned with the perceptions of the three groups, the survey responses from the five respondents were disqualified from the study.

B. RESULTS OF SURVEY

The following section displays the results of the alpha contracting survey provided to participants. Assumptions and analysis of the data are not provided in this section but will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

The following questions are presented in bar graph format. Several graphs represent the combined responses from government contracting professionals, program management employees and contractors. Other bar graphs represent the individual

responses of government contracting, program management and the contractors. In those bar graphs the participant groups are broken out by color, which is indicated at the bottom of each individual chart.

As shown in Figure 5, of the 83 participants that responded to the survey, 38% have utilized alpha contacting once, while the remaining 62% have utilized alpha contracting more than once.

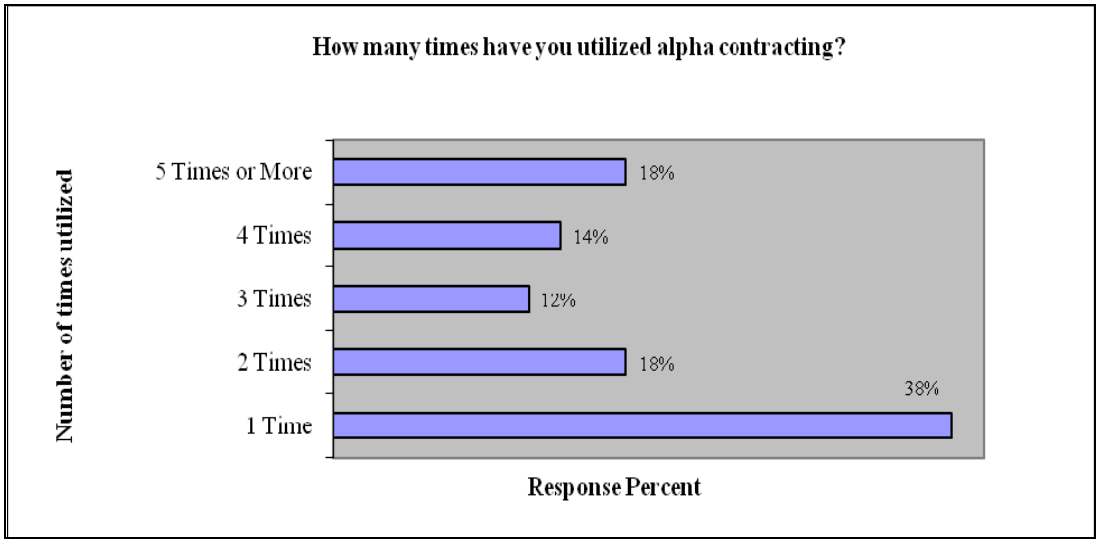

Figure 5. Survey Results Question 2.

As shown in Figure 6, there is a wide range in years of experience the respondents have been in their current field. Survey results indicated that 21% of respondents have been in their field for more than 20 years, 13% of respondents have been in their field for 16 to 20 years, another 21% of respondents have been in their field for 11 to 15 years and 24% have been in their field for 6 to 10 years. The remaining 21% of respondents have been in their current field for 5 years or less.

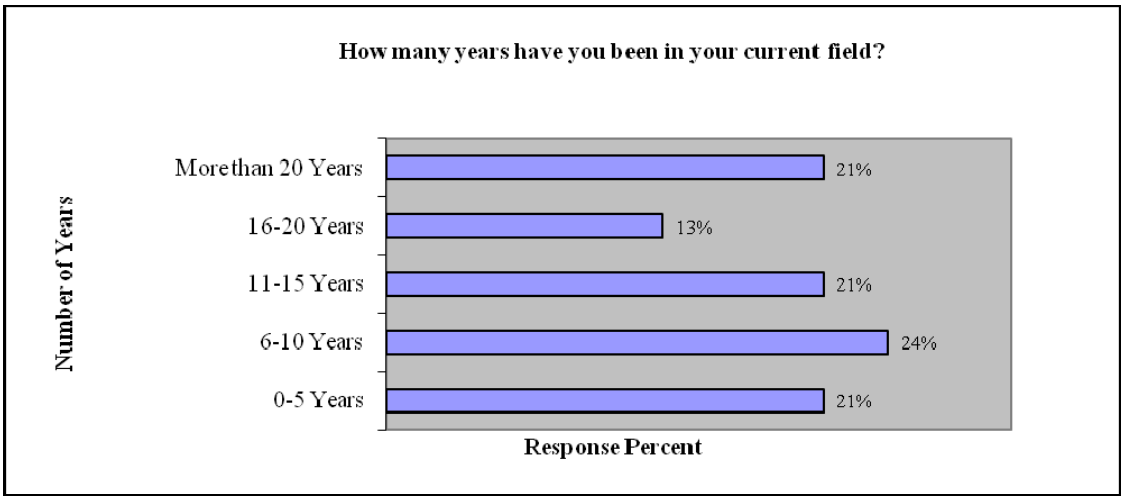

Figure 6. Survey Results Question 4.

As indicated in Figure 7, 69% of respondents reported that alpha contracting was facilitated by government contracting, 21% of respondents reported the process was facilitated by the program management, and the remaining 8% believed that alpha contracting was facilitated by contractors.

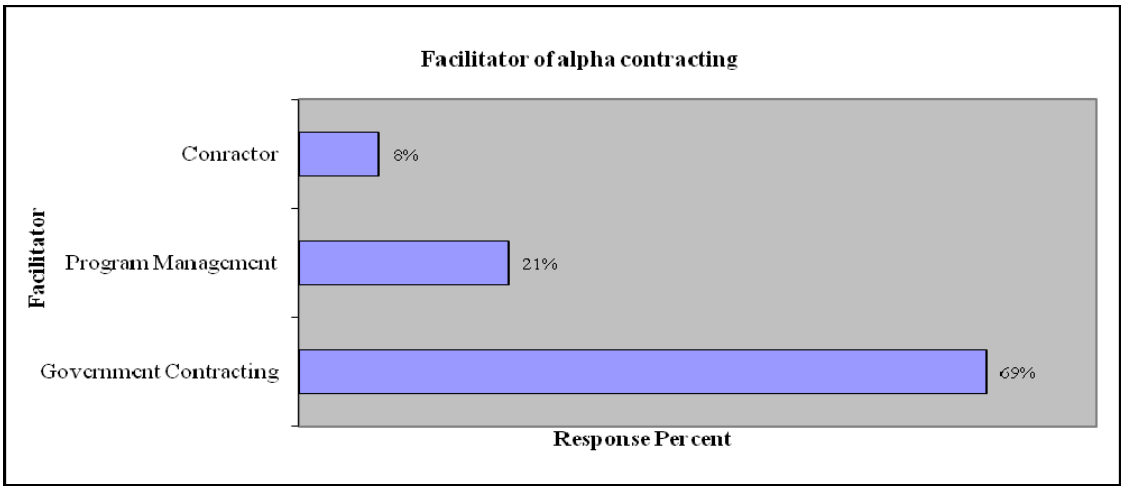

Figure 7. Survey Results Question 5.

In Figure 8, the survey results showed that 45% of respondents utilized alpha contracting for dollar values ranging from $1.1 million to $50 million. It is important to note that 17% utilized alpha contracting for dollar values over $50 million while 38% utilized alpha contracting for dollar values under $1 million.

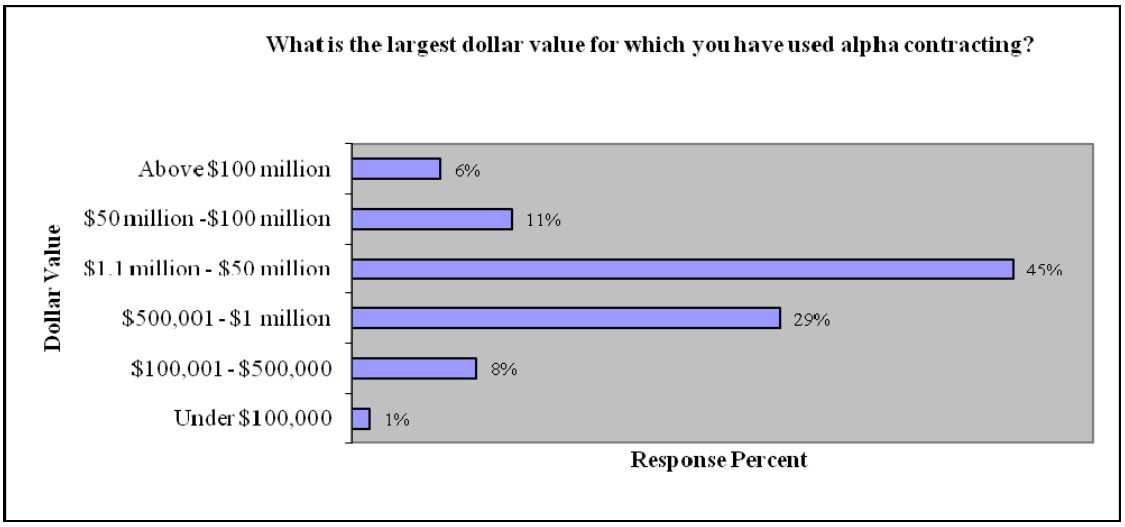

Figure 8. Survey Results Question 6.

All three groups of participants felt that the greatest advantage of alpha contracting was having a better understanding of the requirement. In addition, all three groups felt that having fewer disagreements was of least priority when utlizing alpha contracting.

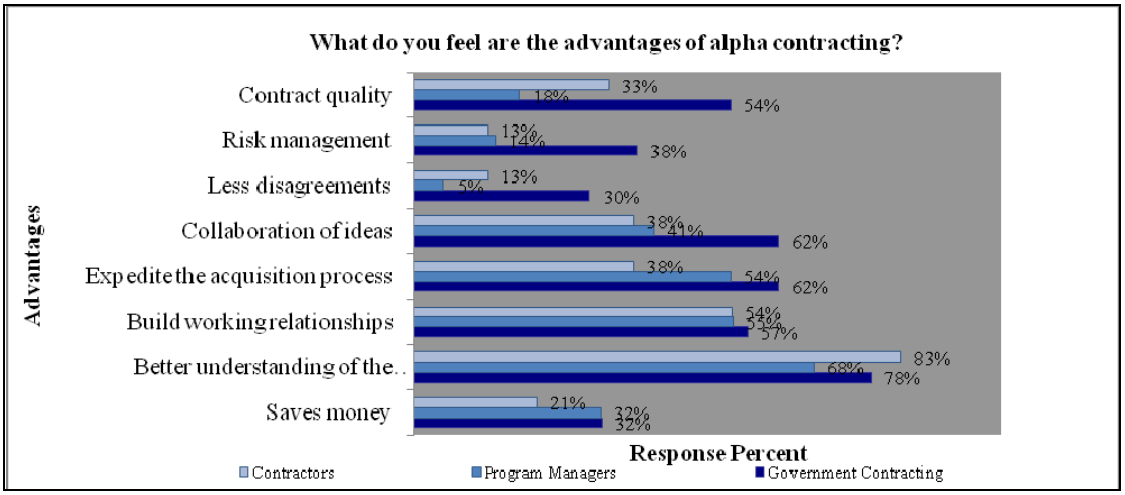

Figure 9. Survey Results Question 7.

According to the survey results in Figure 10, the contractors and government contracting personnel felt that scheduling conflicts was the greatest disadvantage, while the program managers felt that having a tense working enviornment was the greatest disadvantage. All three groups of participants felt that tracking proprietary information was not a significant disadvantage.

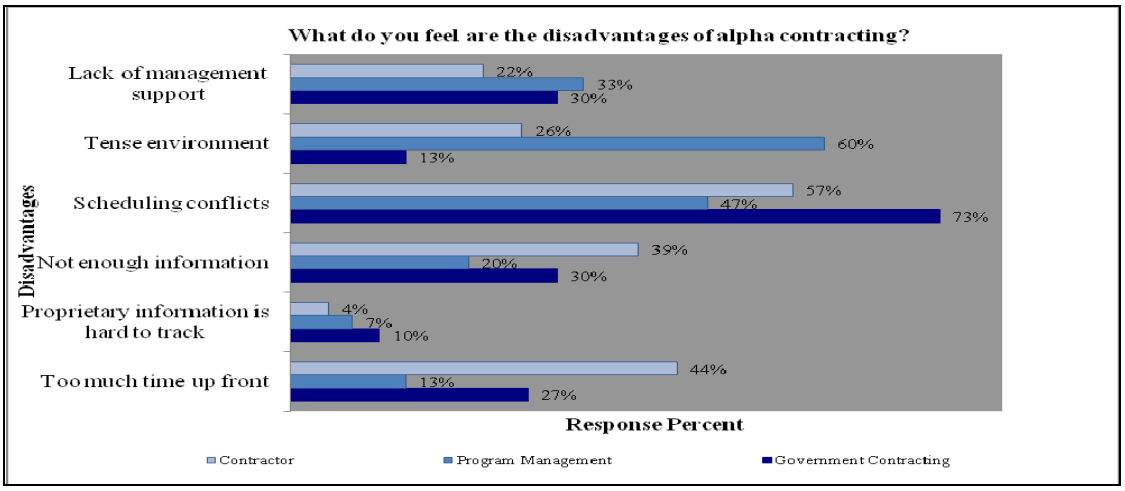

Figure 10. Survey Results Question 8.

Based on the survey results in Figure 11, the communication methods utilized most frequently were e-mail at 86%, telephone at 86% and face-to-face meetings at 72%. Participants utilized video teleconferences the least.

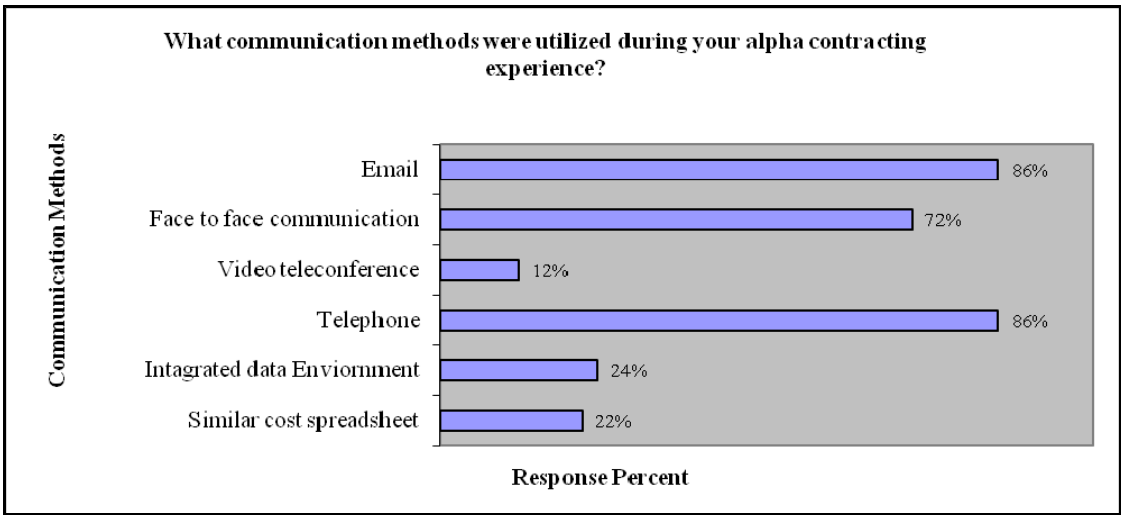

Figure 11. Survey Results Question 9.

The majority of contractor personnel respondents believed that alpha contracting saved on average one to three months of time. In addition, 46% of government personnel agreed with the savings of one to three months. Forty-one percent of program management personnel believed that alpha contracting saved four to six months. None of the participants felt that alpha contracting saved more than nine months.

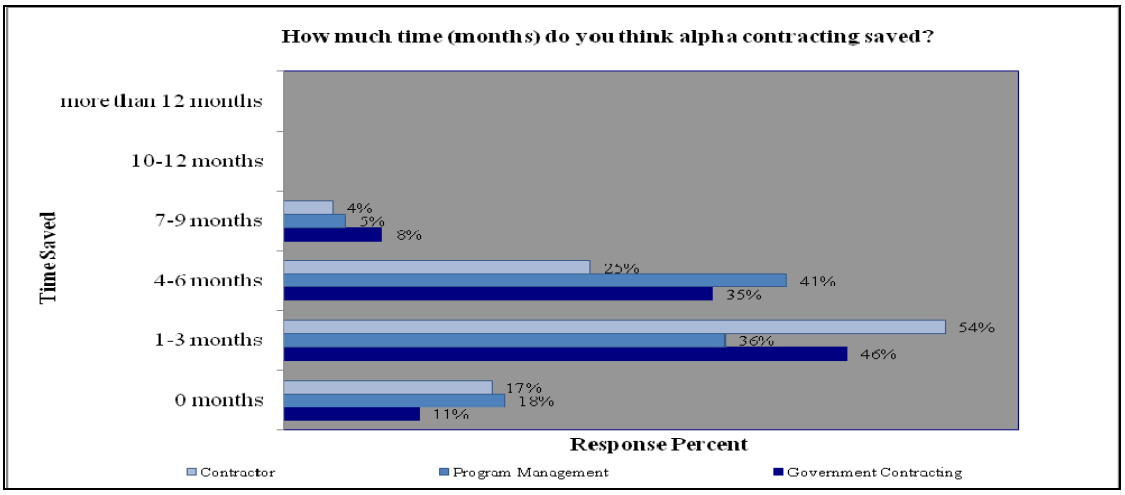

Figure 12. Survey Results Question 10.

As shown in Figure 13, all three participant groups had a moderate level of trust (50% or more) towards others during alpha contracting. In all three groups, 25% to 32% felt trust was high. Additionally, 11% of government contracting employees felt it was extremely high during the contracting process.

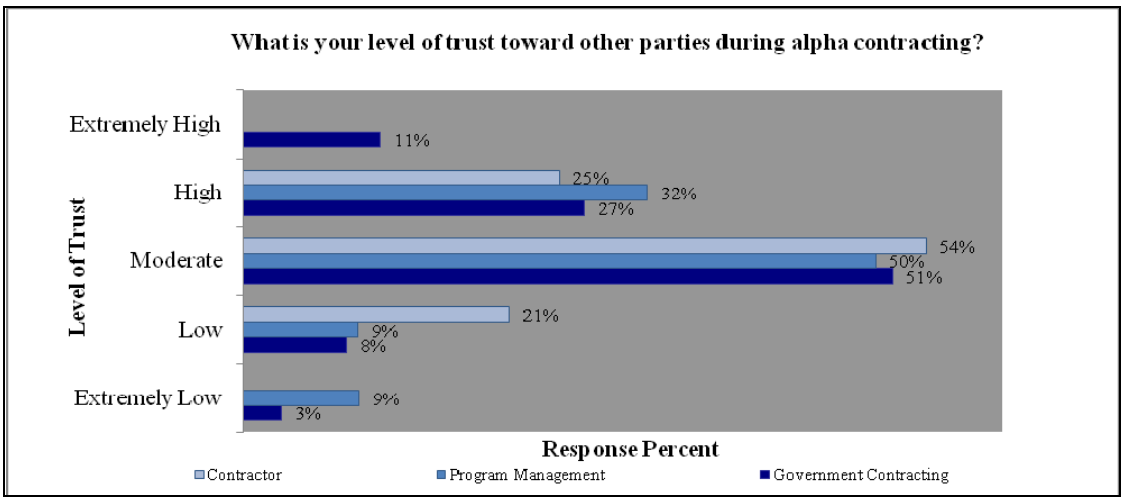

Figure 13. Survey Results Question 11.

Survey results indicated that 33% of contractors reported a 30% decrease in proposal preparation time when using alpha contracting. The results also indicated that 22% of program management experienced a 30% decrease in proposal preparation time when using alpha contracting. Over 24% of government contracting employees indicated

a 30% decrease in proposal preparation time. Eighty percent was the maximum percentage of decrease in proposal preparation time for all participants.

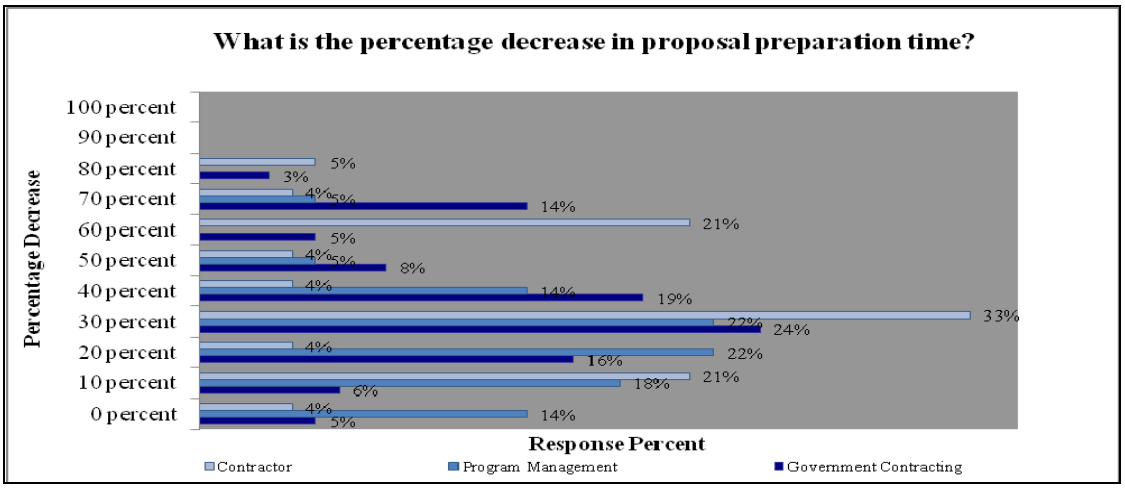

Figure 14. Survey Results Question 12.

Survey results indicated that 25% of contractors had a 20% decrease in proposal evaluation time when using alpha contracting. The results also indicated that 27% of program managers experienced no decrease in proposal evaluation time when using alpha contracting. Government contracting indicated that over 20% have experienced a decrease in proposal time by 40%. There were no contractors or program managers that believed there was a decrease in proposal evaluation time over 60%.

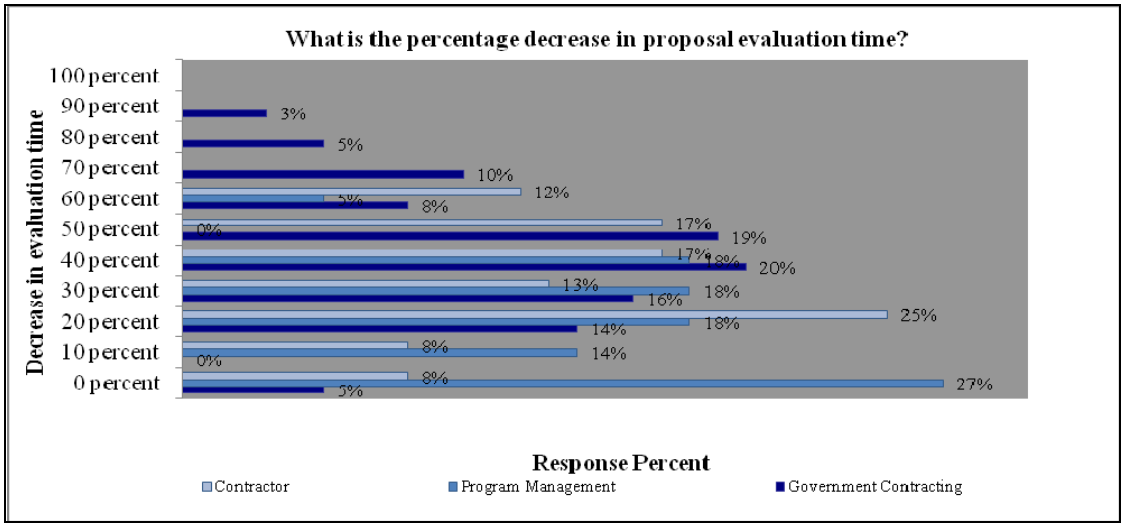

Figure 15. Survey Results Question 13.

Survey results specified that 35% of contractors believed that their understanting of contractual requirements increased by 30% when using alpha contracting. The outcome also indicated that 32% of program managers believed their understanding of the contractual requirements increased by 20% when using alpha contracting. Government contracting indicated that over 19% believed their understanding of the contractual requirement increased by 50%. Additionally, no program managers believed their understanding increased by more than 50%, and no contractors believed that their understanding increased by more than 80%.

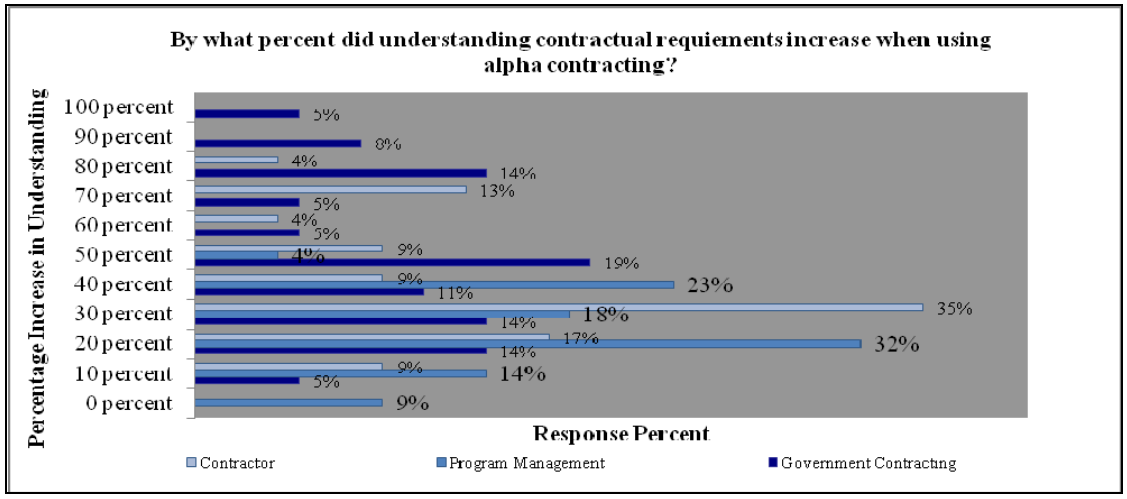

Figure 16. Survey Results Question 14.

Survey results showed that 42% of contractors believed there was a 20% decrease in contract modification as a result of using alpha contracting. Although the survey indicated 27% of program managers believed there was no decrease in modifications, the majority believed that there was 20% or more decrease in modifications. The majority of government contracting personnel believed that it saved 30% of time or more. None of the contractors believed that alpha contracting saved over 60% of time, and none of program managers believed that alpha contracting saved over 80% of time.

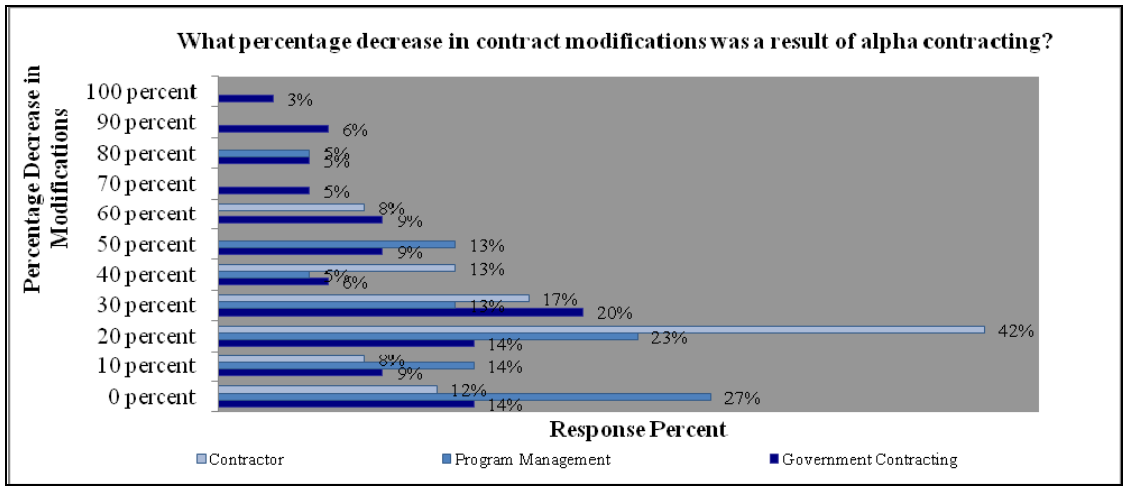

Figure 17. Survey Results Question 15.

Five participants gave no answer as to survey question 16. Based on the survey responses received, as shown in Figure 18, 20% of participants reported making no changes to the milestone schedule, 21% reported making at least one change, 15% reported making changes at least twice, 18% reported making changes three times, 8% reported making changeses at least four times, and 9% reported making changes five times or more.

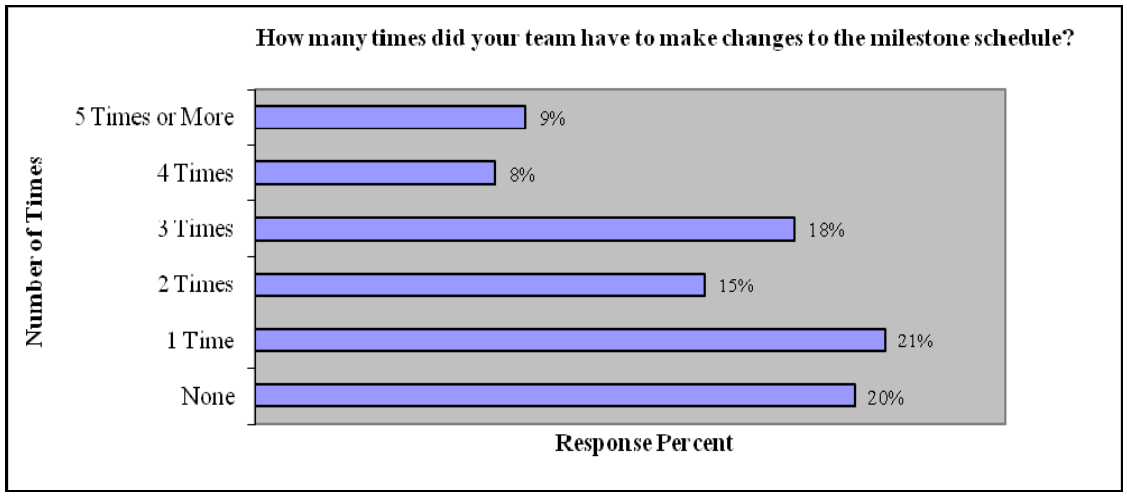

Figure 18. Survey Results Question 16.

As shown in Figure 19, the majority, 71%, of IPT meetings were located at the government facility, while 36% of IPT meetings were located at the contractors facility,

and 8% of IPT meetings were held in neutral locations. Survey results showed in 37% of cases no physical location was used. It is important to note that the location of IPT meetings may have occurred in several locations during alpha contracting.

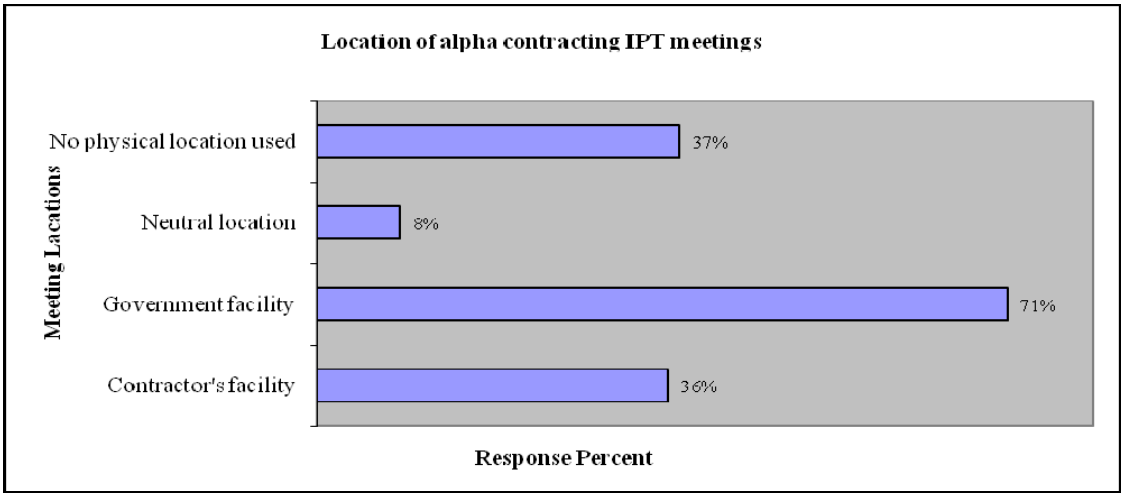

Figure 19. Survey Results Question 22.

According to the survey results, 60% of survey respondents did not have DCMA involved while 38% did have DCMA involved in the process.

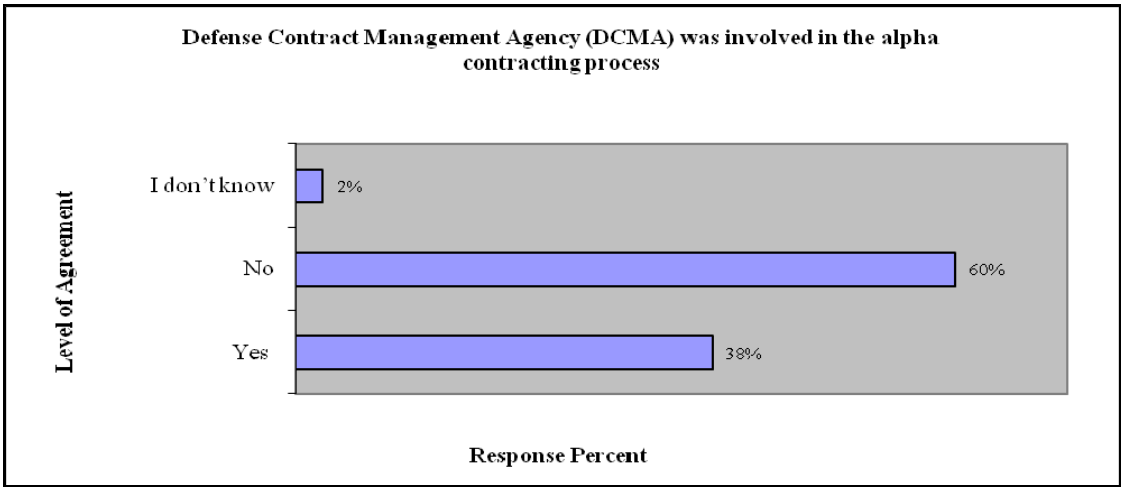

Figure 20. Survey Results Question 37.

According to the survey results, 68% of survey respondents did not involve DCAA while 30% involved DCAA in the process.

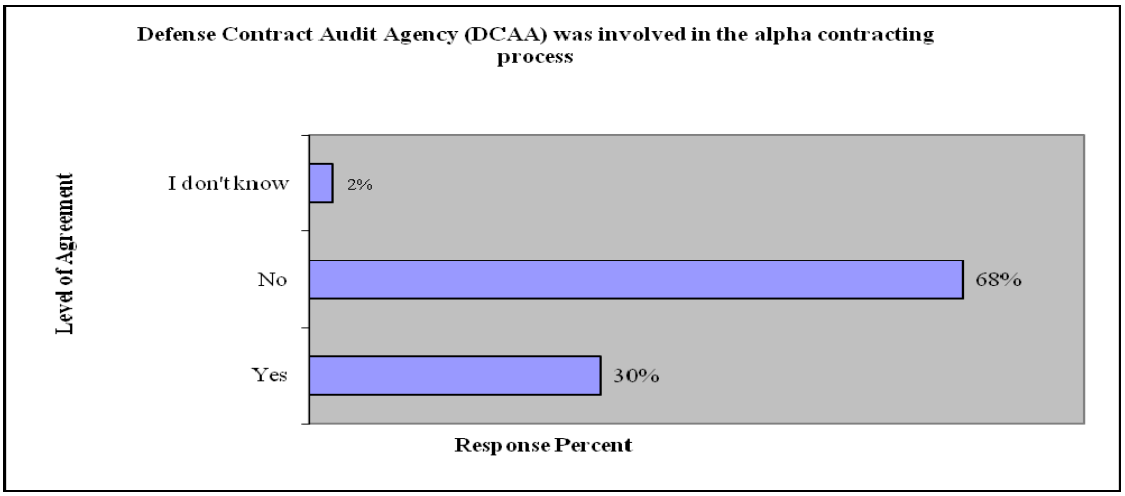

Figure 21. Survey Results Question 38

The following questions were presented in Likert-scale format with choices for strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The neutral category represents the opinion of neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. Neutral may also be perceived as a respondent having no knowledge in that particular area.

The majority of government contracting personnel and program managers believed that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for the IPT. The majority of contractors disagreed with the statement that roles and responsibilities are defined. The percentage of responses for each of the three groups is shown. One government contracting employee skipped this question.

Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for all IPT members during alpha contacting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	30%	11%	45%	14%
PM	0%	14%	14%	58%	14%
Contractor	13%	42%	8%	29%	8%

Table 3. Survey Results Question 17

No survey participants strongly disagreed that alpha contracting is difficult to understand. A strong majority of all three groups believed they clearly understand alpha contracting indicated by 58% of government contracting personnel, 68% of program managers, and 66% of contractors.

I clearly understand alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	5%	14%	58%	23%
PM	0%	9%	5%	68%	18%
Contractor	0%	8%	13%	66%	13%

Table 4. Survey Results Question 18

The survey results showed that 49% of government contracting personnel believed honesty is apparent during alpha contracting, while the majority of program managers and contractors had a neutral opinion. A total of 46% of program managers and 46% of contractors answered the question neutrally as shown in Table 5.

Honesty is apparent during alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	3%	5%	32%	49%	11%
PM	9%	18%	46%	27%	0%
Contractor	0%	25%	46%	25%	5%

Table 5. Survey Results Question 19

The survey indicated 61% of government contracting employees, 72% of program managers, and 50% of contractors agreed that IPT members disclosed pertinent information during the negotiation process. However, 21% of contractors disagreed. One government contracting employee skipped this question.

IPT members disclose pertinent information during the negotiation process.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	6%	22%	61%	11%
PM	5%	9%	9%	72%	5%
Contractor	0%	21%	29%	50%	0%

Table 6. Survey Results Question 20

The majority of government contracting personnel responses, 32%, agreed that IPT members are fully empowered during alpha contracting. However, 50% of program managers answered neutrally and 46% of contractors disagreed with IPT members being fully empowered. The question did not address which specific members of the IPT were empowered.

IPT members are fully empowered during alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	27%	22%	32%	19%
PM	0%	23%	50%	27%	0%
Contractor	0%	46%	29%	21%	4%

Table 7. Survey Results Question 21

As shown in Table 8, the survey indicated similar percentages for each of the three groups in response to the location of the IPT meetings having a bearing on resolution. Additionally, 41% of program managers disagreed with the statement.

Location of the IPT meetings has a bearing on resolution.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	8%	32%	49%	8%	3%
PM	4%	41%	41%	14%	0%
Contractor	8%	17%	50%	25%	0%

Table 8. Survey Results Question 23

In Table 9, the survey results showed that 59% of government contracting employees, 41% of program managers, and 76% of contractors had a neutral opinion of alpha contracting compromising the procurement process. No respondents strongly agreed with the statement. This question was skipped by one participant.

Alpha contracting has caused the procurement process to be compromised.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	22%	59%	19%	0%	0%
PM	4%	41%	32%	23%	0%
Contractor	8%	76%	8%	8%	0%

Table 9. Survey Results Question 24

The majority of government contracting employees agreed that management does not support the intent of alpha contracting at RDECOM. However, 50% of program managers and 54% of contractors disagreed.

Management does not support the intent of alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	11%	30%	19%	32%	8%
PM	5%	50%	27%	18%	0%
Contractor	0%	54%	25%	21%	0%

Table 10. Survey Results Question 25

According to survey results, 32% of RDECOM contracting center respondents agreed that goals are identified and approved at the initial meeting. On the other hand, 50% of program managers had a neutral opinion and 38% of contractor employees disagreed.

Goals are identified and approved at the initial meeting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	19%	22%	16%	32%	11%
PM	5%	9%	50%	36%	0%
Contractor	8%	38%	21%	33%	0%

Table 11. Survey Results Question 26

The general consensus agreed that alpha contracting reduced duplication of work. It is noted that 22% of contracting employees strongly agreed.

Alpha contracting reduces duplication of work.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	3%	22%	5%	48%	22%
PM	0%	9%	27%	46%	18%
Contractor	4%	21%	25%	42%	8%

Table 12. Survey Results Question 27

The survey results showed that 50% of government contracting personnel respondents agreed and 36% strongly agreed that alpha contracting was a productive tool to utilize. The same is true for 63% of program managers and 67% of contractors.

Alpha contracting is a productive tool to utilize.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	6%	8%	50%	36%
PM	0%	0%	32%	63%	5%
Contractor	0%	13%	13%	67%	7%

Table 13. Survey Results Question 28

As shown in Table 14, 39% of contracting personnel agreed that there were fewer disagreements when comparing alpha contracting to more formal contracting procedures. This question was skipped by one participant. Program manager responses ranged from 23% strongly disagreeing, 23% disagreeing, 27% neutral, and 27% agreeing. Contractors had a chiefly neutral opinion, with 42% neutral.

When comparing alpha contracting to more formal (traditional) contracting procedures, there are fewer disagreements.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	33%	17%	39%	11%
PM	23%	23%	27%	27%	0%
Contractor	8%	25%	42%	21%	4%

Table 14. Survey Results Question 29

Question 30 inquired if participants felt part of the team during alpha contracting. Seventy-five percent of government contracting personnel agreed. Half of program managers agreed and the other half had a neutral opinion. Seventy-five percent of contractors agreed that they were part of the team.

I'm part of the team during the alpha contracting process.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	3%	3%	75%	19%
PM	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%
Contractor	0%	0%	17%	75%	8%

Table 15. Survey Results Question 30

Survey results indicated that 57% of contracting employees, 46% of program managers, and 54% of contractors agreed that alpha contracting reduces performance risk.

Alpha contracting reduces performance risk.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	8%	16%	57%	19%
PM	0%	9%	41%	46%	4%
Contractor	0%	17%	21%	54%	8%

Table 16. Survey Results Question 31

When documenting alpha contracting, 35% of contracting employees agreed they could fully document while 35% disagreed. Fifty-five percent of program managers had a neutral opinion. Sixty-one percent of contractors agreed they could fully document the process.

I am able to fully document the alpha contracting process.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	4%	35%	14%	35%	14%
PM	0%	4%	55%	41%	0%
Contractor	0%	13%	26%	61%	0%

Table 17. Survey Results Question 32

The majority of all three groups plan to use alpha contracting in the future. Additionally, 22% of contracting employees strongly agreed.

I plan to use alpha contracting in the future.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	6%	14%	58%	22%
PM	5%	14%	5%	76%	0%
Contractor	4%	0%	21%	71%	4%

Table 18. Survey Results Question 33

As shown in Table 19, contracting employees, program managers, and contractors agreed that the resultant contract reflected what occurred during alpha contracting. Twenty-five percent of contracting employees strongly agreed. One program manager skipped this question.

The resultant contract reflects what occurred during alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	8%	8%	59%	25%
PM	0%	5%	24%	71%	0%
Contractor	0%	0%	8%	84%	8%

Table 19. Survey Results Question 34

Survey results showed that 67% of contracting respondents, 92% of program managers, and 71% of contractors agreed that alpha contracting is easy to understand. No respondents strongly disagreed. This question was skipped by one participant.

Alpha contracting is easy to understand.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	17%	8%	67%	8%
PM	0%	4%	4%	92%	0%
Contractor	0%	13%	16%	71%	0%

Table 20. Survey Results Question 35

Participants were questioned about their level of agreement in regard to adequate initial explanation of alpha contracting procedures. While 32% of government contracting employees and 68% of program managers agreed that "rules of engagement" were explained at the start, 45% of contractors disagreed. Also notable is that 28% of government contracting employees strongly disagreed.

The procedures and "rules of engagement" of alpha contracting were explained at the start.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	28%	16%	16%	32%	8%
PM	0%	9%	9%	68%	14%
Contractor	8%	45%	13%	26%	8%

Table 21. Survey Results Question 36

The large majority of all three groups agreed that the atmosphere of alpha contracting allowed for open communication as shown in Table 22.

The atmosphere of alpha contracting allowed for open communication in both directions.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	8%	11%	65%	16%
PM	4%	5%	5%	77%	9%
Contractor	0%	13%	8%	71%	8%

Table 22. Survey Results Question 39

Survey results showed that 39% of government contracting respondents agreed and 33% disagreed that both parties had appropriate authoritative figures involved. The contractor employee results were also split with 41% agreeing and 38% disagreeing. Fifty-nine percent of program managers agreed. The question did inquire further as to which group the respondents felt did not have the appropriate authoritative figures involved.

Both parties had appropriate authoritative figures involved to make timely decisions.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	3%	33%	11%	39%	14%
PM	0%	14%	27%	59%	0%
Contractor	13%	38%	4%	41%	4%

Table 23. Survey Results Question 40

Survey results indicated that 53% of government contracting employees, 59% of program managers, and 49% of contractors agreed that decisions were made in a timely manner. The results of the survey are displayed in Table 24.

Decisions were made in a timely manner.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	25%	11%	53%	11%
PM	0%	9%	32%	59%	0%
Contractor	8%	22%	13%	49%	8%

Table 24. Survey Results Question 41

Based on survey results in Table 25, none of the three groups believed alpha contracting should be eliminated.

Alpha contracting should be eliminated.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	41%	44%	11%	3%	0%
PM	5%	55%	41%	0%	0%
Contractor	17%	58%	17%	4%	4%

Table 25. Survey Results Question 42

The majority of all three groups of participants have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting. Twenty-two percent of government employees strongly agreed with the statement provided. However, 9% of government contracting employees, 14% of program managers, and 8% of contractors disagreed.

I have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	9%	9%	60%	22%
PM	0%	14%	27%	59%	0%
Contractor	4%	8%	13%	71%	4%

Table 26. Survey Results Question 43

Participants were questioned about their enjoyment of using alpha contracting and 57% of contracting personnel participants, 40% of program managers, and 63% of contractors agreed that they enjoyed the process. However, 46% of program managers had a neutral opinion. No respondents strongly disagreed. However, 8% of contracting employees, 9% of program managers, and 13% of contractors disagreed.

I enjoyed using alpha contracting.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	8%	13%	57%	22%
PM	0%	9%	46%	40%	5%
Contractor	0%	13%	16%	63%	8%

Table 27. Survey Results Question 44

Two participants omitted an answer regarding recommendation of alpha contracting to others. Survey results indicated that 54% of contracting employees, 50% of program managers, and 63% of contractors agreed with the statement. However, 16% of contractors either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

I would recommend alpha contracting to others.					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contracting	0%	8%	8%	54%	30%
PM	5%	5%	40%	50%	0%
Contractor	4%	12%	12%	63%	8%

Table 28. Survey Results Question 45

Questions 46 through 50 of the survey were open-ended questions requesting participants to provide feedback. Question 47 asked participants, "Prior to alpha contracting did your team develop any measures to assess its effectiveness? If so, what were the measures?" A total of 61 participants answered the question, and 46 respondents reported no measures of alpha contracting effectiveness. The remaining 15 participants responded with measures of effectiveness related to schedule, timeliness, PALT, and cost. The four responses that reported saving money or reducing costs were all provided by contractors. The remaining 11 responses, from a mix of contractors and government representatives, were related to schedule, timeliness and PALT.

Of the 83 survey respondents, 51 replied to the open-ended question concerning how conflict was handled. While the majority of the responses indicated that no major conflicts arose, nine responses provided insight into how different IPTs managed conflicts. Responses ranged from "IPT discussed any differences and if they could not be resolved at the working group level it was elevated to the management groups during the out brief and was discussed until it was resolved or elevated higher if not resolved" to "We talked until conflict was resolved. Usually ended in Government changing requirements or contractor increasing price." Other responses included various forms of negotiating and elevating conflict. One participant commented on the importance of compromising.

There were 49 responses to the open-ended style question requesting participants to share what made their alpha contracting experience successful or unsuccessful. Respondents who had a successful alpha contracting experience reported open communication, commitment to a timely award by all parties, and key player involvement as contributing factors. A well defined requirement, trust, and flexibility were also noted. Respondents reported long meetings, the lengthy government approval process, too many authoritative figures, and differences in the understanding of the requirement as part of unsuccessful experiences.

The final survey question requested participants to share any comments or concerns they were not able to express in answering the survey in an open-ended format. The most notable responses included "alpha contracting is much harder than people think; it is not an intuitive process rather it is learned and must be practiced", "open communication was great, but there was no real time savings to the program as a result. Individuals were more focused on getting there [sic] part of the project negotiated and worked through" and "it would be nice to find a way to lessen the intensity among parties during meetings." The responses to the open-ended questions are further discussed in the following focus question responses.

C. OVERALL ANALYSIS

Based on the survey results and literature review, alpha contracting is a constructive tool to utilize at RDECOM, regardless of experience levels of contracting personnel, program management representatives, or contractors. It is also helpful for actions of differing dollar values, though results illustrated that alpha contracting tends to be used more frequently for dollar value acquisitions between $1 million and $50 million.

The survey results also showed that alpha contracting can be successfully conducted at RDECOM using a mix of face-to-face communication, telephone, and e-mail. The overall opinion was that alpha contracting reduced the time it takes to award a procurement in both evaluation and proposal preparation. By including all IPT members as part of the team, disclosing pertinent information, and identifying goals at the initial

meeting, RDECOM can successfully benefit from alpha contracting. Also, management needs to be more open and supportive in exercising alpha contracting to promote its success.

The roles and responsibilities of IPT team members should be explained at the meeting start, especially to contractors, who may not be as familiar with the process. Respondents agreed that both parties need to be honest to build the trust that is so vital to negotiations. The majority of respondents recognized that alpha contracting was a productive tool and that it reduced performance risk. Respondents also showed a favorable opinion overall towards alpha contracting, enjoyed using it, and would recommend using it in the future. The following chapter discusses answers to the focus questions and includes future recommendations for RDECOM based on the survey outcome.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What Is the Audience's Attitude Toward Using Alpha Contracting?

The survey data received from questions 30, 33, and 42 through 45, provided insight into the audiences'attitude about alpha contracting at or with RDECOM. Further definition of "attitude" refers to the participant's individual degree of like or dislike for alpha contracting. Sixty-two of survey respondents agreed that they plan to use alpha contracting in the future. When broken down by group, 58% of RDECOM contracting employees, 76% of program managers, and 71% of contractors agreed.

Of the 66 participants that agreed or strongly agreed that they are part of the team during alpha contracting, 51 agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to use alpha contracting in the future. This correlation showed those who feel part of the team also planned to use it in the future. The strongest indicator of attitude was presented as a survey question asking the participants their level of agreement with the statement, "I have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting." Overall, 63% of the participants agreed with this statement with government contracting respondents having the highest level of agreement. Table 29 shows the comparison between the participants'opinion of alpha contracting and their enjoyment is using alpha contracting. Of the 51 participants that agreed they have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting, 40 also agreed that they enjoyed using alpha contracting.

I have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I enjoyed using alpha contracting.	Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
	Disagree	**100% (1)**	**63% (5)**	17% (2)	0%	0%	
	Neutral	0%	37% (3)	**66% (8)**	14% (7)	0%	
	Agree	0%	0%	17% (2)	**79% (40)**	22% (2)	
	Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	7% (4)	**78% (7)**	
	TOTAL	1	8	12	51	9	

Table 29. Comparison of Opinion to Enjoyment.

Table 30 shows the correlation between the participants'opinions of alpha contracting and their level of agreement on recommending alpha contracting to others. Of the 49 participants that agreed with having a favorable opinion of alpha contracting, 40 would recommend alpha contracting to others. Of the nine participants that strongly agreed with having a favorable opinion of alpha contracting, seven strongly agreed that they would recommend alpha contracting to others. This positive correlation showed that those respondents with a favorable opinion of alpha contracting would recommend it to others. Overall, this implied a positive attitude towards alpha contracting.

I have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I would recommend alpha contracting to others.	Strongly Disagree	**100% (1)**	12.5% (1)	0%	0%	0%	
	Disagree	0%	**75% (6)**	8% (1)	0%	0%	
	Neutral	0%	12.5% (1)	**75% (9)**	8% (4)	0%	
	Agree	0%	0%	17% (2)	**82% (40)**	22% (2)	
	Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	10% (5)	**78% (7)**	
	TOTAL	1	8	12	49	9	2 people did not respond

Table 30. Comparison of Opinion to Recommendation.

The results showed that participants from all three groups had a favorable opinion of alpha contracting, and there was willingness to use it in the future. We can discover from this study that alpha contracting is liked by RDECOM, and that it may be an avenue for future contracts thereby replacing traditional contracting procedures. RDECOM's low survey-response rate from contracting professionals points to the fact that not all employees have utilized alpha contracting. Failure to do so may have resulted in additional time and money to all parties involved.

2. What Are the Benefits, Challenges and Risks of Alpha Contracting for the Contracting Office?

The survey data received from questions 7, 10 through 15, 27, 30, 31, 39, and 41 provided insight into benefits of alpha contracting for the contracting office. Questions 8, 21, 24, and 25 provided insight into the challenges and risks of alpha contracting for the contracting officers at RDECOM. The literature review, case studies, and survey results indicated that alpha contracting is a beneficial tool to the contracting office.

Based on survey results, over 78% of participants felt they had a better understanding of the program requirement, 62% believed they experienced collaboration of ideas, and 58% believed they built working relationships. In addition, over 80% of participants thought that alpha contracting saved anywhere from 1 to 6 months in time. Survey results also indicated that over 78% of contracting respondents had a moderate to high level of trust towards other parties during alpha contracting. Consequently, the participants'responses showed that there was a decrease in proposal preparation and evaluation time, as well as a decrease in contract modifications as a result of utilizing alpha contracting. Results also showed that there was a growth in understanding the contractual requirements. Survey results showed that over 75% of contracting participants agreed that alpha contracting reduced performance risk in their program. Based on the information above, RDECOM contracting participants demonstrated that alpha contracting resulted in increased trust and communication among the parties and decreased rework, performance risk, cost, and PALT.

Despite the fact that contracting personnel have proven there are many advantages employing alpha contracting, they have also pointed out several challenges and risks.

Survey results indicated 73% of contracting personnel believed that scheduling conflicts were the major disadvantage in using alpha contracting. In addition, over 30% believed lack of management support during the process was the second largest challenge. The disadvantages of alpha contracting are increased time commitment, lack of empowerment, and damaged business relationships. As confirmed here, the time commitment and lack of empowerment remain a challenge for contracting. Contracting personnel are encouraged to reach a "win-win" result when negotiating with industry; having a high level of confidence that the procurement process is being upheld increases the probability of having a successful program while utilizing alpha contracting. Over 80% of respondents disagreed that alpha contracting caused the procurement process to be compromised.

This study has indicated that over 67% of contracting participants agreed that alpha contracting was a productive tool to utilize and 58% agreed that they would utilize alpha contracting in the future.

3. What Are the Benefits, Challenges and Risks of Alpha Contracting for Program Managers?

The survey data received from questions 7, 10 through 15, 27, 30, 31, 39, and 41 provided insight into benefits of alpha contracting for program managers. Questions 8, 21, 24, and 25 provided awareness of the challenges and risks of alpha contracting for program managers that work with RDECOM. The literature review, case studies and survey results indicated that alpha contracting is a beneficial tool to program managers.

Based on responses received from survey participants, 68% of program managers held that having a better understanding of the requirement was a major advantage. In addition, over 58% of program managers believed that alpha contracting saved time on programs; and over 76% believed that alpha contracting saved their program on average 1 to 6 months in time. The survey results also indicated that 81% of program managers had a moderate to high level of trust in the other parties during the process. As noted in the literature review and proven in the survey results, these advantages resulted in decreased proposal preparation and evaluation time as well as decreased contract

modifications. Survey results indicated that over 40% of program managers are neutral in their belief that alpha contracting reduces performance risk; over 50% agree that the process reduces performance risk.

According to survey results, program managers experienced a number of disadvantages and risks with alpha contracting that may affect the performance of programs. The results indicated that 60% of program managers believed that having a tense environment is the foremost disadvantage, while 46% believed that scheduling conflicts were the next major disadvantage in utilizing alpha contracting. A tense environment and scheduling conflicts may be attributed to the differences between traditional contracting procedures, to which most program managers are accustomed, and alpha contracting, which encourages the entire IPT to use a teaming approach from beginning to end.

We have learned from this study that over 86% of program management participants agreed that alpha contracting is a productive tool to utilize, and 77% agreed that they would utilize alpha contracting in the future.

4. What Are the Benefits, Challenges and Risks of Alpha Contracting for Industry?

The survey data received from questions 7, 10 through 15, 27, 28, 30, 31, 39 and 41 provided awareness of the benefits of alpha contracting for industry. Questions 8, 24, and 25 provided insight into the challenges and risks of alpha contracting for industries that worked with RDECOM. The literature review, case studies and survey results indicated that most contractors believed that alpha contracting offered numerous advantages, challenges and risks.

Based on survey results over 83% of industry participants had a better understanding of the programs requirements, 54% built better working relationships, and 41% agreed that the process reduced duplication of work. Over 75% of participants had a moderate to high level of trust in other parties during alpha contracting. Over 54% of industry agreed that alpha contracting reduced performance risk in their programs. In addition to these advantages, over 80% felt that the process saved industry anywhere from 1 to 6 months in time overall. Decreased proposal preparation time, limited contract

modifications, and decreased duplication of work, resulted in decreased costs to contractors. An additional advantage of alpha contracting is building a rapport among the parties, which enhances open communication of goals and objectives, as well as provides the opportunity for all team members to resolve conflicting issues in unison. As a result of these advantages, participants experienced an increase in better working relationships, level of trust and overall cost savings to the contract.

While industry alleged that there were major advantages, they also indicated challenges and risks associated with alpha contracting from their perspective. As indicated in the literature review, alpha contracting requires extreme time commitment from all parties involved in an IPT. Although the process is designed to save time, industry believed that scheduling conflicts and up-front time commitments were disadvantages in the utilization of alpha contracting. Based on industry's response, over 56% of participants felt that scheduling conflicts were the major disadvantage of utilizing alpha contracting, whereas 43% of participants felt excessive start-up time was the second major disadvantage. As indicated in the research, having a lack of management support is an inhibitor to the process, but over 54% of industry respondents disagreed that their management does not support the intent of alpha contracting. This showed that the majority of industry that works with RDECOM had management support.

The study showed over 74% of industry participants shared the opinion that alpha contracting was a productive tool to utilize and 71% agreed that they would utilize alpha contracting in the future.

5. What Are the Audiences' Perceptions of Alpha Contracting Efficacy and Self-Efficacy?

The literature review, case studies, and survey results showed that alpha contracting is capable of producing its intended results: a reduction in PALT, cost savings, better understanding of the requirement, and better working relationships. As shown through the survey data above, respondents agreed that alpha contracting reduced duplication of work, maintained the integrity of procurement process, and was a productive tool to utilize. The government contracting office had the most favorable opinion in response to alpha contracting being a productive tool and reducing duplication

of work. Contractors felt the strongest about alpha contracting in terms of maintaining the procurement process. This can be attributed to the fact that alpha contracting involves contractors from start to finish, which allows the contractor to observe the process, and creates more transparency for the contractor. Open-ended responses received in response to "What made your alpha contracting experience successful/unsuccessful?" showed that the survey participants believed alpha contracting had the capacity to work as intended. When providing comments on the survey, one respondent replied, "In my experience, alpha contracting is a very positive method of coming to an understanding of requirements that eliminates the need to trade proposals and proposal reviews back and forth endlessly. Saves a great amount of time and money!"

The participants of the survey perceived that they were capable of successfully performing alpha contracting. The majority of each of the three perspectives agreed that alpha contracting is easy to understand. Contracting and contractor respondents agreed that they are part of the team and could fully document the process. Fifty percent of the program managers agreed. In addition, program managers had the highest percentage of agreement when asked if alpha contracting was easy to understand. The comparison between respondents in agreement that alpha contracting was easily understood to respondents who were able to fully document the process is shown. This further supports the fact that respondents believed they not only understood alpha contracting, but also were capable of performing it. However, note that 26% of participants that agreed with having a favorable opinion of alpha contracting did not agree that they could fully document the process. The capacity for increased self-efficacy exists and will be discussed in the recommendations section.

I have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting.							
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I am able to fully document the alpha contracting process.	Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	2% (1)	0%	
	Disagree	0%	25% (2)	17% (2)	26% (13)	0%	
	Neutral	0%	**63% (5)**	**50% (6)**	20% (10)	22% (2)	
	Agree	0%	12% (1)	33% (4)	**54% (27)**	33% (3)	
	Strongly Agree	0%	0%	0%	0%	**45% (4)**	
	TOTAL	1	8	12	51	9	1 person did not respond

Table 31. Comparison of Opinion to Ability to Document.

Survey participants believed that alpha contracting can be successfully performed and that they, personally, can perform it. Based on the case studies in this project as well as literature review including success stories and lessons learned, participants viewed alpha contracting as a useful and accessible tool for procurement.

6. How Can We Utilize the Results of This Study to Improve Alpha Contracting at RDECOM?

The following recommendations are based on the results of this study:

Develop written guidance and policy for alpha contracting at RDECOM. Due to the non-existence of specific DoD guidance, it is recommended RDECOM develop internal policy for conducting and participating in alpha contracting. Based on the Competing Values Framework examined above, in order to establish a clan model, the internal guidance should be a collection of lessons learned and recommendations rather than mandated procedures. Based on survey results, topics contained in the guidance should include the establishment of conflict resolution procedures as well as measures for effectiveness. Further recommendations would include the use of face-to-face meetings as the acquisition permits based on the Media Richness Model, a thermometer chart establishing technical priorities, and the creation of an interactive

database where all parties can access up to date documents, cost spreadsheets, meeting minutes, weekly milestones, events, and logistical planning.

Include DCMA and DCAA when appropriate. Based on the survey results, DCMA and DCAA were rarely included in alpha contracting with RDECOM. Reasons for their exclusion are unknown, but if the acquisition permits, both DCMA and DCAA should be invited as members of the IPT. The inclusion of DCMA and DCAA early in the acquisition process may increase the benefits RDECOM receives from alpha contracting.

Contracting center conduct training for program managers and contracting employees. Although feelings of efficacy and self-efficacy were positive, conducting training for both contracting employees and program managers would promote full understanding of alpha contracting. Combined with the recommendation for written guidance above, training on the usage of alpha contracting at RDECOM may increase the frequency of usage and allow RDECOM to be more effective in its mission.

Establish RDECOM management support. The lack of management support for alpha contracting is an inhibitor to the process, as management commitment influences the process to move quickly. Without commitment from management, the IPT can only progress in increments, each of which is followed by management consultation. This becomes time consuming. Therefore, to fully receive the benefits of alpha contracting, management support should include full empowerment of team members to increase trust and autonomy.

B. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study focused on answering the intended research questions, there are other aspects of alpha contracting that could be investigated. The findings of our research could become the foundation for future areas of research.

One area for continued research is examining the perceptions of alpha contracting within other government agencies. The process of alpha contracting at RDECOM could benefit from investigating the usage, techniques, and user attitudes of those other agencies. A comparison and contrast to other agencies'experiences would provide information on additional lessons learned as well as a measure of progress for RDECOM

as it continues to perfect alpha contracting methods. Examining other agencies and analyzing their perceptions could become the foundation for DoD-wide alpha contracting guidance.

Should RDECOM pursue the recommendation to develop guidance for alpha contracting, future research should include a follow-up of this study involving re-distribution of the surveys to verify any significant changes in findings within the three participating groups. Investigation of any changes in attitudes, feelings of efficacy and self-efficacy, or benefits, challenges, and risks for the user, will further identify areas where RDECOM can improve its usage of alpha contracting.

C. CONCLUSION

This study examines alpha contracting from perspectives of the government contracting office, the government program office, and industry to provide comprehensive data resulting in best practices for all participants at the Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM). As part of this examination, a literature review, case studies including the JSOW and ASCW, and an on-line survey reveal that many agencies across the DoD, including RDECOM, have welcomed alpha contracting as an avenue to reduce acquisition lead time, cost, and revisions while simultaneously increasing communication and trust within the acquisition team.

An analysis of the literature review and survey results revealed that contracting personnel, program management, and industry participants found alpha contracting was a productive tool. They would utilize it in future actions, although all three participant groups pointed out the need for schedule improvements. The results provided in this study showed the need for development of internal guidance and policy for usage at RDECOM, the inclusion of DCMA and DCAA, the establishment of training, and increased management support. All of these improvements could enable alpha contracting to be more mutually beneficial, and enhance efficacy and user self-efficacy. While the advantages of alpha contracting are prevalent at RDECOM, areas for improvement and the potential for increased frequency of use remain.

APPENDIX

1. Alpha Contracting Survey

* **1. You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "Analysis of Alpha Contracting" as part of the researcher's Joint Applied Project at the Naval Postgraduate School to measure your perceptions about your work experience with alpha contracting. You are being asked to complete a short survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. The survey is completely anonymous. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you choose to participate you can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study. You will not be penalized in any way or lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled if you choose not to participate in this study or to withdraw. Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, the survey only asks for broad information and no other identifiers from participants. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you individually, the findings may result in organizational changes that benefit employees. No tangible compensation will be given for your participation. A copy of the research results will be available at the conclusion of the study via email.**

If you have any questions or comments about the research, or you experience an injury or have questions about any discomforts that you experience while taking part in this study please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Lisa L. Massi Lindsey, 916-873-2922, llindsey@nps.edu. Questions about your rights as a research subject or any other concerns may be addressed to the Navy Postgraduate School IRB Chair, Dr. Lawrence Shattuck, 831-656-2473, lgshattu@nps.edu.

Statement of Consent. I have read the information provided above. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and all the questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I can print a copy of this consent information for my records. By checking the box below, I agree to participate in this study. I understand that by agreeing to participate in this research and signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights.

◯ I agree to participate in this study.

* **2. How many times have you utilized alpha contracting?**

If you HAVE NEVER utilized alpha contracting, there is no need to continue. Thank you for your time.

If you HAVE utilized alpha contracting, please answer the following questions based on your most recent experience with alpha contracting.

3. Please select your role in the alpha contracting process.

- [ ] Government Contracting
- [ ] Government Customer/Program Management
- [ ] Contractor

4. How many years have you been in your current field?

Select one:

- [ ] 0-5 years
- [ ] 6-10 years
- [ ] 11-15 years
- [ ] 16-20 years
- [ ] more than 20 years

5. The alpha contracting process was facilitated by:

- [ ] Government Contracting
- [ ] Program Management
- [ ] Contractor

6. What is the largest dollar value for which you have used alpha contracting?

Select one:

- [ ] Under $100,000
- [ ] $100,001-$500,000
- [ ] $500,000-$1 million
- [ ] $1.1 million-$50 million
- [ ] $50 million- $100 million
- [ ] Above $100 million

7. What do you feel are the advantages of alpha contracting?

- [ ] Saves money
- [ ] Better understanding of requirement
- [ ] Build working relationships
- [ ] Expedite the acquisition process
- [ ] Collaboration of ideas
- [ ] Saves time
- [ ] Less disagreements
- [ ] Better quality contract
- [ ] Rick management
- [ ] Contract quality

Other (please specify)

8. What do you feel are the disadvantages of alpha contracting?

- [ ] Too much time up front
- [ ] Proprietary information is hard to track
- [ ] Not enough information
- [ ] Scheduling conflicts
- [ ] Tense environment
- [ ] Lack of management support

Other (please specify)

9. What communication methods were utilized during your alpha contracting experience?

Select all that apply:

- ☐ Similar cost spreadsheets
- ☐ Integrated Data Environment (shared Government and Contractor databases)
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Video teleconference
- ☐ Face to face communication
- ☐ Email

Other (please specify)

10. On average, how much time (how many months) do you think alpha contracting saved?

	0 months	1-3 months	4-6 months	7-9 months	10-12 months	more than 12 months
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

11. What is your level of trust toward other parties during alpha contracting?

	Extremely Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extremely High
Level of Trust	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. What is the percentage DECREASE in proposal PREPARATION time?

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

13. What is the percentage DECREASE in proposal EVALUATION time?

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. By what percent did understanding contractual requirements INCREASE when using alpha contracting?

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Increase in Understanding	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

15. What percentage DECREASE in contract modifications was a result of alpha contracting?

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Percentage decrease	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

16. How many times did your team have to make changes to the original milestone schedule?

17. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for all Integrated Product Team (IPT) members during alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. I clearly understand alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. Honesty is apparent during alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

20. IPT members disclose pertinent information during the negotiation process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

21. IPT members are fully empowered during alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

22. The location of the alpha contracting IPT meetings was:

Select all that apply:

- ☐ Contractor's facility
- ☐ Government facility
- ☐ Neutral location
- ☐ No physical location used

23. Location of the IPT meetings has a bearing on resolution.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

24. Alpha contracting has caused the procurement process to be compromised.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

25. Management does not support the intent of alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

26. Goals are identified and approved at the initial meeting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

27. Alpha contracting reduces duplication of work.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

28. Alpha contracting is a productive tool to utilize.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

29. When comparing alpha contracting to the more formal (traditional) contracting procedures, there are fewer disagreements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

30. I'm part of the team during the alpha contracting process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

31. Alpha contracting reduces performance risk.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

32. I am able to fully document the alpha contracting process.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

33. I plan to use alpha contracting in the future.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

34. The resultant contract reflects what occurred during alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

35. Alpha contracting is easy to understand.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

36. The procedures and "rules of engagement" of alpha contracting were explained at the start.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

37. The Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) was involved in the alpha contracting process.

	Yes	No	I don't know
Select one:	◯	◯	◯

38. The Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA) was involved in the alpha contracting process.

	Yes	No	I don't know
Select one:	◯	◯	◯

39. The atmosphere of alpha contracting allowed for open communication in both directions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

40. Both parties had appropriate authoritative figures involved to make timely decisions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

41. Decisions were made in a timely manner.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

42. Alpha contracting should be eliminated.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

43. I have a favorable opinion of alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

44. I enjoyed using alpha contracting.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

45. I would recommend alpha contracting to others.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Select one:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

46. What changes would you recommend for future use of alpha contracting?

47. Prior to alpha contracting did your team develop any measures to assess its effectiveness? If so, what were the measures?

48. In your experience with alpha contracting, how was conflict handled?

49. What made your alpha contracting experience(s) successful/unsuccessful?

50. If you have comments or concerns that you were not able to express in answering this survey, please enter them in the space provided.

Thank you for your input!

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